

CHRONICLES OF CULTURE

LETTERS & ARTS

MORALS & MANNERS



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Renounce Yalta

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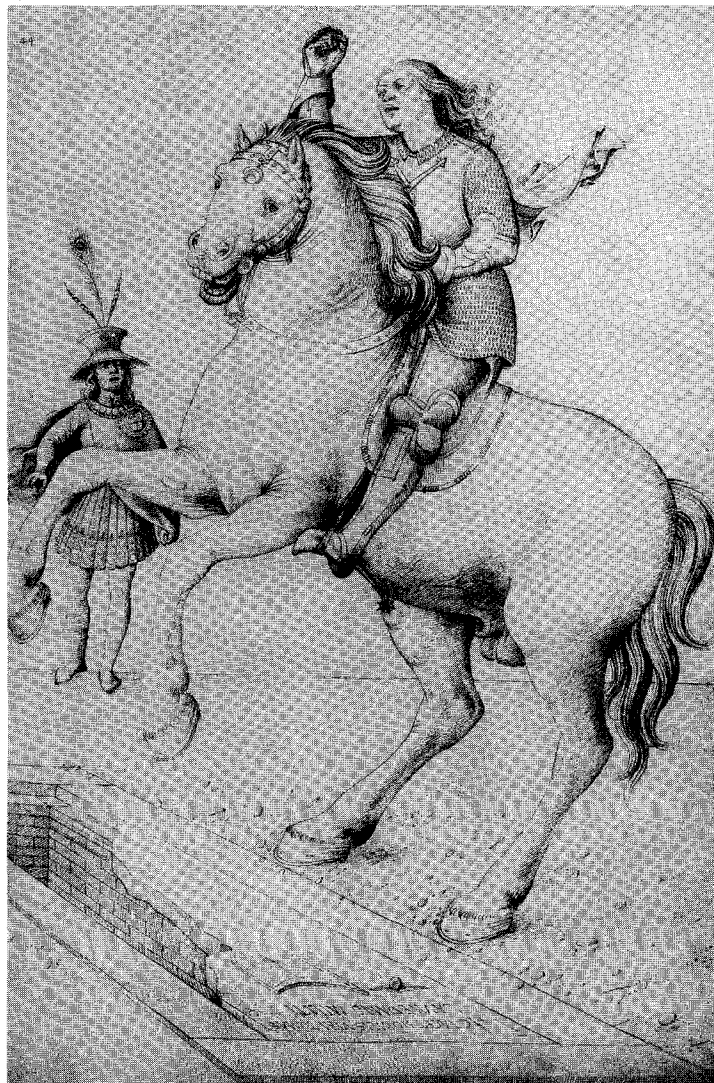
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Renounce Yalta



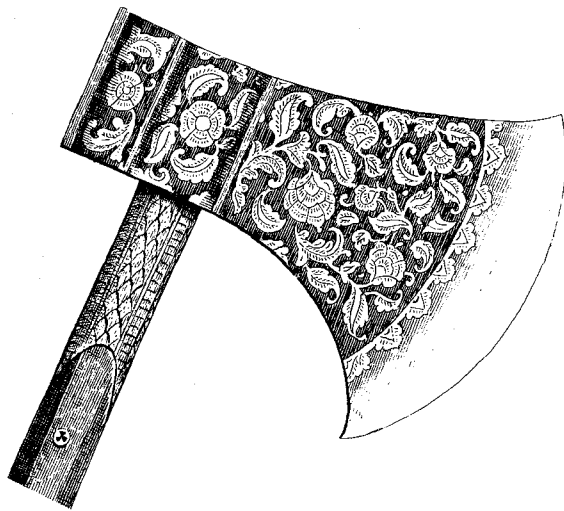
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COMMENT

The case study of Teheran and Yalta can be ultimately reduced to the question: Should the President of the United States lie? Pericles would have thought so, "for there is justice in the claim that steadfastness in his country's battles should be a cloak to cover a man's other imperfections; since the good action has blotted out the bad, and his merit as a citizen more than outweighed his demerits as an individual."

The bottom line of the game of international politics can be formulated through another question: Should a President be guided by his personal code while performing public functions, or does his position grant him a special "ethical" code that gives him dispensation and expiates lying (or some other dishonorable behavior) as long as it is done on behalf of his own perceptions of the interest of his country in the international arena? We could dispense with the question by simply assuming Mark Twain's belief that diplomacy is "a gentle art of lying in state," but what happens if you are the victim? The victims, in this instance are the 10 Central European republics which lost their freedom as a result of World War II: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. As one perceptive BBC commentator noted in a broadcast last January, immediately after World War II "Commissars took over from the Gauleiters in command of the capitals of Central Europe." This loss of freedom for well over 170 million people was not the result of their military defeats on the battlefield, but of the decisions of three men—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin



—who carved Central Europe at conferences at Teheran, Moscow, and Yalta. Thorough review of the primary data on the decision-making processes during the war period indicate that Mr. Roosevelt's attitudes, values, priorities, and personal style bear great responsibility for what happened to Central

Europe. In fact, millions of people in Central Europe are paying for Mr. Roosevelt's decisions with their lives even today, Poland being territorially the largest.

In posing the question about the President's dissembling in the line of duty it is necessary to bring forth evidence that Mr. Roosevelt, as President of the United States, did lie in connection with Poland.

Some empirical data about him is useful here. He was born January 30, 1882 and died on April 12, 1945. He was an Episcopalian of Dutch ancestry, a lawyer by occupation, a Democrat, and President of the United States for 12 years and 39 days. He had six children and 13 grandchildren. At the age of 39 he was stricken with infantile paralysis and was confined to crutches or a wheelchair for the rest of his life (a fact which, by mutual consensus, the American press hid from the general public). He inherited \$600,000; his mother was worth \$1 million. The American Communist convention held May 22, 1944, in New York City in anticipation of the 1944 general election led to a position wherein Roosevelt's candidacy was favored. Roosevelt described himself during one of his press conferences as being "a little left of center." There are widely differing opinions about him as President. For example, James MacGregor Burns writes in his *Roosevelt: the Soldier of Freedom, 1940-1945* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York; 1970): "he had a strong and active faith and a huge and unprovable [sic] faith, in the possibilities of human understanding, trust, and love." One less charitable example, this from C. L. Sulzberger in *Such a Peace: The Roots and Ashes of Yalta* (Giniger; New York; 1982) says: "[Roosevelt was] by instinct rather than brain, a politician; a man whose place on the greased pole of history had already been achieved before the war by his slick intuition; a bit of gentleman-shyster but oh, what a cleverness and skill he showed, and oh, what a charm he could summon to his will. And he truly favored poor and underprivileged . . . but for the war he was a bit too crafty. He frequently talked out of two sides of his diplomatic mouth."

On August 14, 1941, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Churchill and President of the United States agreed on a Joint Declaration known as the Atlantic Charter, in which they stated the purposes and principles of their political activities. Among the principles were those guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the states participating in the war against Germany. The Atlantic Charter was signed by 47 countries, including Poland. Poles thought these principles were part of a *binding* agreement. Six months after signing the Atlantic Charter, Roosevelt, in a discussion with the Polish Ambassador to the United States, Jan Ciechanowski, and Polish Ambassador to Great Britain Count Edward Raczyński (presently the President of the Polish Government-in-Exile with domicile in London), confirmed that "there could be no question . . . of being at variance with the Atlantic Charter." But, alas, about

two years later in Teheran, Roosevelt attended a secret meeting with Stalin (even Churchill was not told about it), during which he broke his word given to the Polish Ambassadors and in the Atlantic Charter. During this meeting President Roosevelt and Stalin agreed on changes in the Polish frontiers; moreover, the President also disclaimed interest in the political integrity of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia in favor of the Soviet Union.

The meeting took place on December 1, 1943, at 3:20 P.M. The United States was represented by President Roosevelt, Mr. Harriman, and Mr. Bohlen (who served as interpreter). The

Soviet Union was represented by Marshal Stalin, Foreign Commissar Molotov, and Mr. Pavlov (as interpreter). A report of this fateful meeting is preserved in Roosevelt's Presidential Archives in Hyde Park (see also the U.S. Department of State's *The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943*; Government Printing Office; Washington, DC).

Mr. Churchill's response to Teheran was anger. "A bloody lot has gone wrong" were his words. It is not to say that Mr. Churchill was impeccably innocent in respect to this deal. It was he who, on Stalin's insistence, through the British Foreign
(continued on page 31)

In hindsight, we may claim, with a reasonable amount of certitude, that the Yalta Agreement was accepted and approved because President Roosevelt succeeded in convincing both the American people *and* the American establishment of that pact's beneficiality for America. Even those who then spoke of its moral speciousness came to see in it some pragmatic advantage or American interest, or saw it as an exercise in realpolitik. Four decades later, we know that Mr. Roosevelt's intentions proved to be in error, his reasoning a calamitous ineptitude, and his assurance a lie. History has disproved every one of his assumptions and hopes. In retrospect, Yalta appears to be the first debacle—a Dunkirk of sorts—in the subsequent showdown with forces of totalitarian tyranny that inevitably followed in Hitler's bloodied footsteps, forces that are waging a ferocious assault on our beliefs, our institutions, and our very existence. Yalta was a monumental concession to the stubborn Soviet demand that the postwar world should not be ordered by the victors according to some superior political and ethical principle, but structured on and divided into autonomous, impenetrable spheres of influence. Accepting the Soviet postulate, Mr. Roosevelt fell into a trap: only the autonomy of the Soviet sphere was assured to be hermetic by dint of the nature of communist power. The a priori vulnerability of *our* sphere was a foregone conclusion, a factor built into Soviet plans, the trump card of their calculations. Without Yalta, there would have been neither a war in Korea nor in Vietnam.

The peaceful coexistence between two contradictory sociomoral systems, especially when violence constitutes the philosophical essence of one of them, is a futile endeavor. A failure to recognize this was Mr. Roosevelt's personal mistake. He chose to ignore that Yalta neutralized America's military superiority and freed the Soviets to use their might, which at that time was inferior to ours, for a neo-imperialist drive. Our repugnance for any use of arms except in the defense of our own territory, or of our citizens' legitimate interests overseas, foreclosed a firmer American response to Soviet expansionism. Of course, *we* could not make war then because the very idea of war against a putative ally would have been the

gravest offense to our fundamental moral sensibilities, to our very notion of integrity and honor—and *they* knew it. Nevertheless, our choice and our decision, their inevitability and nobleness notwithstanding, were a cardinal error—if only because those making the policy never seemed to suspect that our implacable enemy would not have hesitated one second if he had a monopoly on the atom bomb, and would perceive and capitalize upon the slightest chance of instantly making the world safe for communism, Russian style. The postwar era of "peace" has sufficiently documented that whenever the Kremlin sniffed the scantiest smell of our vincibility, it put its proxies in motion and triggered wars—that is, the Soviets created those woes that Mr. Roosevelt hoped to eliminate through the spheres-of-influence arrangement. Consequently, our vulnerability to the threat of the ultimate solution became increasingly palpable. Now, our vacillations make it look as if our demise is only a matter of time—and time and patience are weapons with which a totalitarian state can arm itself at the lowest cost.

Since 1945 we have amply demonstrated to the world (including *their* part of the world) that though we are not perfect, we are a morally superior society and polity, better suited to provide an example for mankind. The post-Yalta American reality, however, makes it clear that our worst enemy is not perhaps even the Soviet Union and its ideology, but our incertitude and self-doubt. All those among us who deny us the right to act as humanity's best friend, all those who fanatically insist that our commitment to decency and fairness and rationality and respect for the law is actually an empty promise, and that we have no moral right to claim any moral primacy over the Soviet crime of genocide, subjugations of entire nations, and cruel abuses of entire societies including their own, are a bleeding ulcer in our body. This subversion of faith in our own value, which is so meticulously documented by history, is our worst disease, one which pushes us toward national suicide. Its germs can be found in the ideological climate of Yalta, in the act of moral surrender that contaminated our history and made life for two generations more difficult than it should have been. (LT) □

Selling the Rope . . . and More

Joseph Finder: *Red Carpet*; New Republic/Holt, Rinehart & Winston; New York.

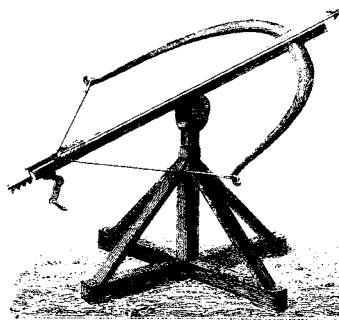
by Henry L. Mason III

One of the most persistent sources of confusion among educated Americans is the failure to realize that the Soviet Union's relations with the outside world are conducted on levels which do not correspond to those of democratic societies. On *Good Morning, America*, for example, David Hartman recently described Stanislav Menshikov, a functionary of the Communist Party's Central Committee, as a foreign policy "advisor" to the Soviet government. In reality, the Central Committee's apparatus "advises" the Soviet government in precisely the same way that Edgar Bergen acted as adviser to Charlie McCarthy. A Communist dictator:

can ignore the [Politbureau] and fail to call plenums of the Central Committee and Congresses of the Party, and nothing will happen to him as long as he relies on the Central Committee's secretariat, but once he starts acting over the head of the secretariat he's done for; the secretariat directly controls the Party, the political police and the armed forces (A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiya Vlasti [The Technology of Power]* (3rd ed., Frankfurt, 1976), p. 711).

Thus, in the Soviet Union the dominating institution—the Bolshevik superego, as it were—is the hierarchically structured ("democratic centralist") Communist Party; this body also handles relations with Communist and other "fraternal" parties abroad. The second level, which can be thought of as the ego or external personality of the U.S.S.R., is the Soviet government, which signs treaties, operates embassies, and engages in the manifold diplomatic ac-

tivities of a modern state. Finally, the Soviet id is made up of numerous agencies ("all-union foreign trade associations"), whose purpose is to engage in commercial activities necessary to satisfy the perennially frustrated Soviet economy. Each of these three levels is in turn supported by the Soviet propaganda and espionage apparatus (press, broadcast media, and KGB), as well as by the Soviet armed forces when required.



Westerners are constantly surprised to discover that Soviet behavior on one level does not necessarily imply corresponding behavior on another; indeed, it is a basic principle of Soviet policy that normal diplomatic and commercial relations with capitalist states are perfectly consistent with revolutionary subversion directed against them. Despite repeated lessons over more than 60 years, Americans still find it hard to believe that the purpose of all levels of Soviet society is to serve the Communist apparatus and not the other way around.

Red Carpet is about the effects of this failure on a number of Americans who have been prominently associated with Communist commerce. Although Finder does not attempt to describe the overall dimensions of Soviet trade with the West, its importance to the U.S.S.R. can be judged by a brief summary which recently appeared in *Pravda* (October 5, 1983):

From the developed capitalist countries the U.S.S.R. purchases equipment

for the chemical, metallurgical, and other branches of industry and for the agro-industrial complex, as well as machines and installations for drilling, boring and geological prospecting, lifting and transport equipment, highway-construction vehicles and appliances. We also obtain licenses on new technological processes and equipment. In addition, we import from those countries pipes, rolled ferrous metals, alumina, bauxite, chemical products, consumer goods, grain and food-stuffs.

Not to mention truck factories, computer technology stolen from Silicon Valley, and, as *Red Carpet* reminds us, Pepsi-Cola. Nor is this a new phenomenon; it has been estimated that well over 90 percent of Soviet industrial enterprises were built with varying amounts of Western assistance, equipment, or technology.

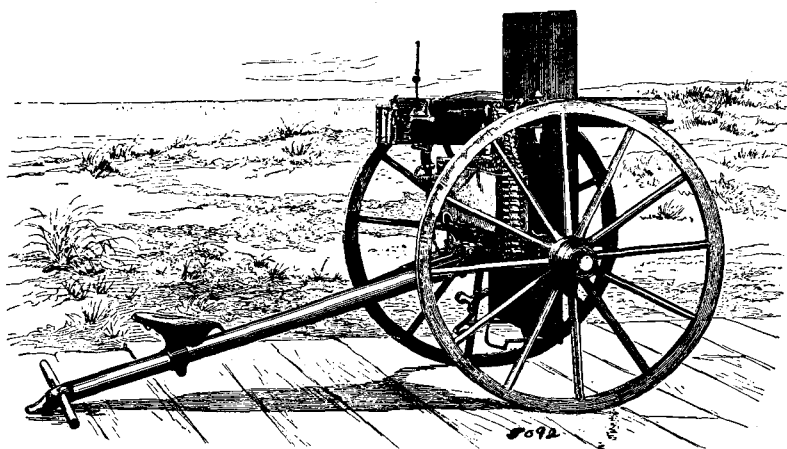
Given the unblushing and implacable hostility of the Soviet Union toward the capitalist world, why would any American businessman trade with it? *Red Carpet* uses five examples (Armand Hammer, Cyrus Eaton, Averell Harriman, Donald Kendall, and David Rockefeller) to provide five answers: ideology, eccentricity, cupidity, vanity, and stupidity. It is a striking fact, moreover, that none of the major figures in Soviet-American trade seems to have made much money at it; Finder's book is in large part a description of how the Bolsheviks used American businessmen for their own political, diplomatic, and financial purposes. As Alexander Todorovsky, an early "proletarian" writer whose views Lenin admired, put it in 1918:

Rapping the exploiters on the knuckles and rendering them harmless is only half the battle. The job will be done when we put them to work, and by the work of their hands we will be able to make our new life better and strengthen the Soviet power.

Mr. Mason is an attorney in Chicago.

Since the early 1920's the most persistent and obtrusive example of an American tout for Bolshevik business has been Armand Hammer ("indubitably the Kremlin's favorite capitalist"). Finder devastatingly recounts Hammer's career of dissimulation which began when his father's Communist connections led to a brief meeting with Lenin in 1921, and which reached its twilight only with the death of Leonid Brezhnev. Hammer's wheelings and dealings with the Bolshevik leadership constitute 60 years' proof of the principle (bluntly stated by a Chekist defector as long ago as 1931) that the Soviet Union dispenses economic favor in return for political assistance; any doubt that Hammer has consciously lied to serve the Bolshevik cause can hardly survive his comparison of Lenin with Christ, his characterization of Leonid Brezhnev as "kind, human and warm-hearted," and his fantastic description of Mikhail Suslov as "a scholarly-looking individual with a kindly smile and an . . . intelligent face." Hammer is

ideology. His contribution to the ideology was precisely zero. But not withstanding this fact his role in Soviet ideology was enormous. He was the spirit and personification of the ideological machine which attained monstrous dimensions in the Soviet Union after the Second World War. This machine was characterized by formalism, tedium, drabness, creative infertility and, despite these characteristics or even because of them, by a vast capacity to manipulate millions of people by lobotomizing their consciousness into conformity. Suslov was equal to the machine; it is impossible to dig up a single Marxist ideologue more mediocre than he was. He was beyond all comparison the most outstandingly undistinguished of all the superlatively undistinguished Soviet ideologists. He was a spectacular proof of the fact that among the Soviet leadership even creatures who are at most half alive and at least half demented can play a decisive role. He was perhaps the most powerful goose-egg among all



not describing St. Francis of Assisi, but a hideous Stalinist living mummy whose only known contribution to human happiness was the joy that he caused by dying; when he finally did die at the age of 80, the émigré writer Alexander Zinoviev celebrated the event with an article entitled "At Last!"

Suslov was the ideological symbol of Soviet society. He did not create the

the nullities who hold power in the Soviet system. (A Zinoviev, *Ni Svo-body, ni Ravenstva, ni Bratstva* [Neither Liberty nor Equality nor Fraternity], (Lausanne, 1983) p. 68.

In comparison with Hammer's detestable conduct, the antics of Finder's other "heroes" are merely contemptible rather than repulsive. Cyrus Eaton, an "inveterate iconoclast" and congenital eccentric, promoted the Pugwash

Notables

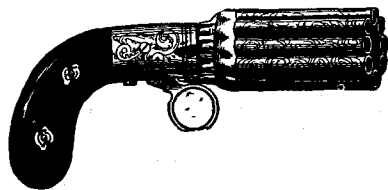
Raw Material

"J. D. Salinger's could-be son has returned from the Unknown!" That's the reaction that Thomas Pynchon's *Slow Learner* (Little, Brown, Boston) will (if it already hasn't) evoke from those book reviewers who are always on the lookout for something that's bold but not too risky: homogenized genius. *Slow Learner* consists of five stories that saw little (*Kenyon Review*) or big (*The Saturday Evening Post*) magazine publication between 1959 and 1964. By way of reference it should be noted that Pynchon was born in 1937 and that *V.* appeared in 1963, *The Crying of Lot 49* in '66, and *Gravity's Rainbow* in '73. The stories are, as Pynchon admits in his introduction, clearly the works of a college student and recent graduate. Some people, those who are more skeptical about Pynchon's value (remember the brouhaha surrounding the National Book Award presentation to what many considered the unreadable *Gravity's Rainbow*?), will remark, "Pynchon's pulling a fast one, turning a buck by reissuing material that would be otherwise forgotten in a library store-room if he wasn't a semicult figure." Part of that may be true, yet were there voices raised against the shade of John Gardner when his workbook for would-be writers was published last year?

While *Slow Learner* can be mined for some of the ore of *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, that's not the point of the publication, if it can be accepted that the project isn't a purely mercenary one. Commonly, people who pick up a Bic or slap a disc into a word processor think that they can move from point A (writing) to point Z (an interview on Carson's show) without experiencing the discrete events of a learning curve. Pynchon's collection shows—with all of its puerile philosophy, stilted dialogue, and other common characteristics of a maturing writer—that it's a long way from B to Y. As Dr. Johnson noted, example is more efficacious than precept; *Slow Learner* is nothing if not working papers or a blueprint. □

Conferences for Western-Soviet fraternization largely from personal spite at the U.S. government and lust to possess the Nobel Peace Prize (he had to be content with the Lenin Peace Prize). Averell Harriman, by contrast, periodically nourished the vain delusion that commerce would moderate Bolshevik rapacity. Donald Kendall wanted to see Pepsi-Cola in the U.S.S.R. largely because Coke hadn't gotten around to it, and also because he was flattered by the lavish attentions of the Bolshevik tyrants (one of the weirdest illustrations in the book is a picture of the PepsiCo Board of Directors meeting in Novorossisk under a portrait of Lenin). And David Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank financed the Kama River truck plant, which built the vehicles used by Soviet troops in Afghanistan, apparently for no better reason than that the Soviets wanted the factory and the Export-Import Bank had already agreed to help.

The disdain the Bolsheviks felt for the fawning barons of American business is abundantly shown by their selection of Anastas Mikoyan as Minister of Foreign Trade to deal with their gullible visitors; Mikoyan's influence on policy was as close to nonexistent as any senior



Bolsheviks could have been ("We let him stay on in the leadership," Khrushchev once remarked, "because he dances the *lezginka* beautifully"). Among the numerous jokes the Soviets have told about Mikoyan for almost 50 years—one of the few which is not obscene—describes how a group of workers and peasants petitioned the Academy of Sciences to remove the letter "m" from the Russian alphabet on the ground of superfluity; in support of

their petition they submitted the following explanation:

We have no money. Maize and meal do not exist. There's no meat, no milk, no macaroni, and no margarine. There are no manufactured goods. All there is is Mikoyan, and Mikoyan is no reason to have a separate letter of the alphabet.

It is utterly characteristic that Cyrus Eaton once described Mikoyan as "an extremely clever man with very wide experience with humanity" and a "tremendous understanding of history" (as Tolstoy once remarked about another Westerner who thought he would make his fortune in Russia: "*Quos vult perdere—dementat*"). Under such circumstances, it is perhaps less than surprising that the Bolsheviks had no trouble exploiting Eaton and the other capitalist cretins for their own ends;

Lenin had little doubt that bourgeois culture would produce idiots eager to advance their own destruction:

We cannot build Communism from any materials other than those created by capitalism, or from any cultural apparatus other than that which is perverted by the bourgeois environment and which is therefore inevitably permeated—once discussion turns to the human material which forms part of any cultural apparatus—with bourgeois psychology. In this fact lies the difficulty of constructing the Communist society, but in this fact is found also the guarantee that it can and will be built successfully.

Red Carpet, depressing as it is, performs the useful service of making apparent to Americans what the Bolsheviks have always known about the character and intelligence of their groveling commercial suitors. □

Tending the Abused Garden

Max Hayward: *Writers in Russia: 1917-1978*; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego, CA.

by Charles A. Moser

At the time of his premature death in 1979, Max Hayward was among the finest Western interpreters of contemporary Russian literature in the Soviet Union. As one of Britain's most accomplished Slavists, he had obtained a research position at St. Anthony's College, Oxford for use as his chief base of operations, though he always remained a bit of an academic outsider. Relieved of most teaching duties, he devoted his energies to translating—either alone or in collaboration with others—such central modern literary documents as Abram Tertz's (Andrei Sinyavsky's) *The Trial Begins*,

Dr. Moser is professor of Slavic at the George Washington University, Washington, DC.

the two lengthy volumes of Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoirs, Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, and Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, not to mention a number of lesser-known works. In addition to translating, he also wrote numerous introductions, articles, and essays, primarily on the subject of 20th-century Russian literature. As things turned out, though, he never published an entire book of his own, and it is that deficiency which his close American associate Patricia Blake has set out to remedy with this volume, which she edited.

Patricia Blake has remained even more thoroughly outside the academy than Hayward: she has worked for many years as an editor at *Time* magazine, specializing in contemporary Soviet culture. Like Hayward, she has made significant and serious contributions to our comprehension of the Russian enigma as an editor and interpreter of the best writing to come out of the Soviet Union since

Stalin's death. She, like him, has functioned as a "custodian of Russian literature in the West, until such time as it could be restored to Russia." Both Hayward and Blake accepted an important responsibility to both Western and Russian culture. And each found in the other a loyal friend.

Miss Blake prefaces this volume with a lengthy memoir of Hayward, an essay wholly sympathetic to him and his views but one which at the same time maintains a fine and objective balance in its presentation. The bulk of the book consists of Hayward's writings, most of which were previously published, and many of which illustrate his magnificent gift for encapsulating vast sweeps of Russian cultural history in graceful English for the intelligent nonspecialist and specialist alike. To be sure, the first essay violates the book's declared chronological limits, for it surveys the entire history of the Russian Empire in 45 pages in a way which could scarcely be improved upon. Two long essays treat Soviet Russian literature as a whole; one article deals with the dissidents in Soviet literature as of the very early 1960's; and a thought-provoking piece analyzes the theory and dismal practice of "socialist realism," the "basic method" of Soviet literature. The volume's second section includes generally shorter essays on individual contemporary writers: Pasternak, Akhmatova, Solzhenitsyn, and Sinyavsky, for all of whom Hayward felt a special affinity. The volume ends with a very useful selected bibliography of Hayward's works.

In addition to his remarkable ability to synthesize large amounts of material for the nonspecialist, Hayward displayed an invaluable faculty for seeing the important things clearly, sensibly, and in a proper philosophical perspective. He valued truth and those who told it; he prized artistic and intellectual freedom; he unhesitatingly supported those who risked much to defend truth and freedom under the totalitarian conditions of Soviet society. In his essays on the history of the Russian Empire down to 1917 he argues that the October Revolution,

though perhaps unavoidable, was a tragedy for the development of Russian society and culture, and that pre-revolutionary Russia compared favorably even with mid-Victorian England. "In retrospect," he writes, "there seems little doubt that, but for the war and the Revolution, Russia would have developed into a liberal bourgeois democracy in which Moscow and Petersburg might easily have come to outshine the capitals of Western Europe."

But war and revolution did supervene, which led to the eventual imposition of severe political and cultural controls by the state, controls aimed at buttressing the objectives of the government that have endured down to the present day. And it was the contemporary situation which aroused Hayward's concern.

In his trenchant discussion of the doctrine of socialist realism in literature—which requires that writers make unmistakably clear their faith in socialism's ultimate triumph—Hayward maintains that the approach is intrinsically hostile to lyric poetry, but that Stalin "had a kind of superstitious appreciation of the supreme worth of those very few who in every generation stand outside and above their age." And he attributes to that "superstitious appreciation" the ability of such literary giants as Boris Pasternak (in my view the greatest Russian 20th-century poet, and quite possibly the greatest poet of this century in any language) and Anna Akhmatova to survive the purges that swept away so many of their contemporaries.

After 1917 the newly established Soviet regime did not move immediately into cultural politics with full force. Writers, artists, and intellectuals enjoyed a modicum of freedom during the 1920's, although there were many who saw the handwriting on the wall and emigrated to the West. By 1934, however, the Soviet dictatorship had extended its writ to all areas of culture, and for the next two decades enforced it with extreme ruthlessness and with all the repressive apparatus of the state. Despite all this,

CONFLUENCES

Dostoevsky's Daring

Many of the truest lines in Shakespeare are in the mouths of unreliable characters: Edmund on the fatuity of astrological fatalism, for instance. Dostoevsky at times adopted a similar ploy, allowing the drunken sot Marmeladov to speak for Christianity and permitting the foolish dilettante Stepan Verkhovensky to champion the value of art. The reasons for Dostoevsky's strategy are explored by John Jones in *Dostoevsky* (Clarendon/Oxford University Press; Oxford), a laudable work of criticism. "Dostoevsky cannot foster *any* of his dearest values," Professor Jones observes, "except obliquely, by stealth, by catching them napping." Hence, the choice of inebriates and fops as spokesmen. Hence, too, the strategy Jones calls "the true Dostoevsky posture of surrender to the enemy" wherein the novelist allows such characters as Kirilov and Ivan Karamazov to articulate their nihilistic views in the absence of any effective ideological rejoinder other than the narrative itself. However awkward this technique may appear, it succeeds with Jones, who finds Dostoevsky's conservative views "boring outside his art, and sometimes repellant," but who admits that this same conservatism "turns to gold" in the novels.

Unfortunately, Dostoevsky's homeland is now governed by an ideology which manages to turn most valuables into lead. As Jones demonstrates, the official dogma of socialist realism distorts Soviet criticism and editing of Dostoevsky. Nonetheless, from the perspective of a writer who trusted that his readers would value true insights even when conveyed by dolts and would detect lies even when truth-tellers are not part of the story, the situation is not entirely without hope, however fragile, of eventual transformations in harmony with a favorite Dostoevsky theme: *voskresenie*, "regeneration." □

Hayward believes, the entire effort did not achieve its objectives:

Soviet cultural policy . . . has failed to harness literature and the arts (except by debasing them) to its aim of the social and moral transformation of man in a new image. It has failed to enlist the support of anyone truly gifted in the

younger generation. It has failed even to retain the allegiance of those of the older generation who once thought of service to it, not as bondage, but as a kind of higher spiritual freedom.

The extent of that failure could be vividly measured by the cultural and intellectual influence that such poets as Akhma-

tova and especially Pasternak, who never bowed at all to the demands of the authorities, enjoyed among the Soviet intelligentsia. Indeed, as World War II approached its conclusion, Pasternak decided that if things did not improve after the end of the conflict he would write a novel which would be "a challenge to everything Stalin and his regime stood for," in Hayward's words. And so in 1946 he began *Dr. Zhivago*, a work which, through the power of art, called into question all the assumptions of those who made the October Revolution. Even the dullest within the Soviet establishment recognized the impact *Dr. Zhivago* could have within even the most firmly established totalitarian state: consequently it has never appeared in the Soviet Union, and will not appear there in the foreseeable future, although it is among the greatest of contemporary novels. Soviet leaders may not be the most intelligent of men, but they instinctively comprehend the symbiotic relationship between politics and culture, as did Hayward when he defended *Dr. Zhivago* and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* against some of their Western detractors who sought to separate the two spheres entirely.

In any case, once the bonds of cultural repression had been loosened after Stalin's death, Pasternak's influence spread until it engendered a number of "dissonant voices in Soviet literature," to use the title of a collection published by Blake and Hayward in 1961. They in turn became ever more audible as the 1960's unfolded, until, under the inspiration of such people as Sinyavsky and Daniel (the first writers ever imprisoned in the Soviet Union for their writings alone) and especially Solzhenitsyn, the authorities faced something resembling a cultural rebellion with inescapable political implications. And Hayward was there, working untiringly to publicize these new developments in Soviet culture throughout the world.

With the growth of both *samizdat* and contacts with the West which the

SURVEY

Spring 1984

Volume 28 no 1 (120)

Andropov and Chernenko Whither Big Brother?

Chernenko, in his role as ideological controller, has been promoting "socialist realism" in the Soviet arts and literature; it would seem that it is "socialist funerealism" that prevails in Soviet life.

However "interim" a leader Chernenko may turn out to be, neither the problems of the "real" succession, nor the problems of the Soviet economy can be swept under the carpet.

In this issue of **SURVEY** we scrutinize Andropov's 15 months in power and analyse what Chernenko's succession may signal. We also have an extended analysis of the problem of Soviet economic reform which includes a sensational Soviet document – the leaked **Novosibirsk Report**.

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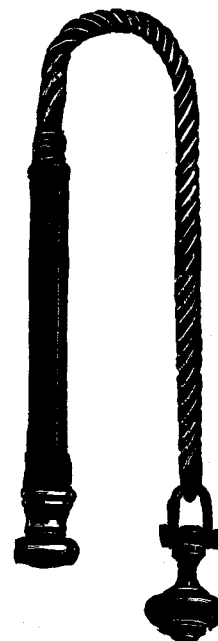
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Soviet leadership did not wish to terminate, it became clear that a new strategy would be required if this cultural disaffection were to be contained. The Soviet leaders decided that the tack which would do them the least harm would be to expel their cultural dissidents from the Soviet Union (Pasternak had refused to go to Stockholm to receive his Nobel Prize for fear he would be prevented from returning to his homeland). Thus there was an unprecedented eviction of the flower of the Russian cultural intelligentsia from the Soviet Union, a great wave that swept out not only writers like Solzhenitsyn, Aksyonov, Sinyavsky, Voinovich, and many others, but also dancers, painters, musicians, scholars, people in every field of cultural endeavor, often with established reputations, who were forced to find a path through alien cultures—although, to be sure, they have formed clusters in certain localities where they can sustain their own culture.

It is difficult to foresee the ultimate result of this massive cultural bloodletting. In the short run, it undoubtedly strengthens the Soviet regime internally, since it removes sources of active dissension. That may be an ominous signal that the Soviet Union plans to intensify its military pressures upon us: by eliminating dissi-

dent intellectuals the Soviet leaders may be effectively clearing the decks for action. In the long run, however, the loss of the most creative people in the Soviet Union—even in areas seemingly remote from politics—may lead to cultural and political stagnation and the ascendancy of bureaucratic hacks. Cultural freedom is linked to political freedom: where cultural freedom is diminished, political freedom must be circumscribed as well. Max Hayward understood that fact, and so he worked to support and strengthen those inside the Soviet Union who took great risks for the sake of cultural freedom. At the same time he recognized that he was merely a “custodian”: if Russian culture is truly to flourish, it must do so within its own borders. It is an irony of history that, by acting as he did, Hayward may have promoted the destruction of a freer Russian culture within the Soviet Union by helping to create the conditions which led to the recent expulsions. But as an honorable man he could not have done otherwise. If Russian culture within the Soviet Union is temporarily crippled, the guilt lies upon the heads of the Soviet leadership, and not upon Max Hayward’s conscience. The ironies of history cannot constrain the consciences of individual men. □

Possibly the best thing to do is draw up a balance sheet. The debit side will begin by noting that Wilder—who was famously and unjustly accused of plagiarizing his material from James Joyce—was



evidently a modern writer, even a modernist in some respects. But his work is not placed in the literature of the 1920's and the 30's. This is not to demand, along with the wretched Michael Gold, that literature have some—a particular—kind of social significance. But it is to ask that a biographer now writing after Richard Ellmann, Carlos Baker, and Justin Kaplan have some sense of all three elements of a writer's biography: life, times, and text. *The Enthusiast*, which is closely based upon letters, carefully, excessively, details how Wilder spent the day. But the times are a blank. There is not even an attempt made to sketch in the way things were while Wilder was writing.

Next, the question of criticism. What can be made of a book that includes this observation about *The Woman of Andros*: “We are meant to glimpse the cyclical character of experience, day following night, death following life, civilization succeeding civilization, the singularity of each person, place and time”? Now this is

Pop Biography

Gilbert A. Harrison: *The Enthusiast: A Life of Thornton Wilder*; Ticknor & Fields; New Haven, CT.

by Ronald Berman

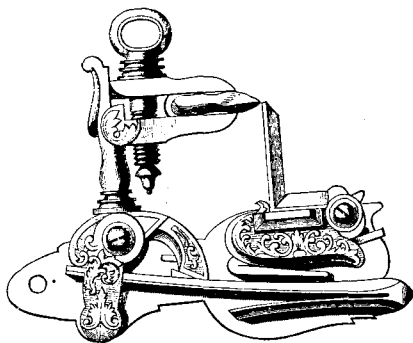
Thornton Wilder was a hugely successful writer and evidently a very good man. As to the first, in 1927 *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* earned \$20,000 in royalties, a figure which can be compared with the amount that *The Great Gatsby*, pub-

Dr. Berman is with the department of literature at the University of California, San Diego.

lished two years earlier, generated in 1927: approximately \$50.00. As to the second, Wilder has left enough evidence of his loyal friendships, his charities, and his public interest to convince pretty nearly anyone that, like his characters in *The Skin of Our Teeth*, he did a superior job of being alive. But this biography of Wilder is short of the kinds of interpretation that both the work and the life require. Although it has been praised to death, the book is a kind of respectable failure. It is good reading, but the author spends more time accurately describing social trivia than he does discussing Wilder, whom I admire.

the language of piety, the kind of stuff we hear at graduations. It has no critical content—and seems to have no subject.

Third, the bulk of the book is about Wilder's career as a playwright, and it does tell us a great deal about whom he met and how his work went. But it is all done in a vacuum: there is no differentiation between one theater and another; nothing about the context of the American stage when his work was being performed. On the other hand, we find that



Wilder slept in a Murphy bed on one tour, and that he liked zwieback, peanut butter, and boiled eggs.

In short, the biography is not at all about ideas or issues. It is a faithful translation of letters and interviews and of what else we will never know, because, unlike other first or second-rate literary biographies now being produced, *The Enthusiast* does not name any of its sources or tell us which manuscripts are in which library. There is no chronology. The index is minimal. And there is no bibliography. This is then a pleasant, discursive book for the general reader and not much use for anyone else.

But there is a credit side. The book is flawed, but not a waste of time. First, the matter of Wilder's homosexuality is tidily disposed of in a single chapter called "Men and Women." While this means that the rest of the book is free of information, or of speculation, one can also say that the whole matter is handled with grace. Harrison is not a psycho-historian, so he spares us from knowing (or assuming) too much. Evidently Wilder liked

women, loved some men, and was often more or less in neutral.

The book is chatty and well-written. It is almost masterful when it considers Wilder's family, especially his father. In fact, it is worth the price of admission for those chapters that evoke a splendid picture of America before World War I. Here, at its beginning, the book is able to convey some sense of both life and times. Here is Amos Parker Wilder, U.S. consul general in Shanghai, writing to his children in Berkeley, California in 1910:

We did have a big tennis party yesterday, about 40. I led them up to the lemonade trough (of course we had tea, etc. also) and looked them right in the eye. Men love to be led, and they saw I was master of the situation and not ashamed; even the men of vine-kissed France and big-stomached Germans from the far off beer country put their snouts into the cooling beverage and pronounced it good. I do hope my boys and girls will grow up to be not timid, time-serving, mucilage-backed men and women who are afraid that unless they do as everyone else does they will be out of fashion or laughed at—but big, gracious, jolly, sympathetic, commanding men and women who do not follow the fashion but make it—the whole man and woman touched with the quiet dignity that in a way detaches him or her without breaking the bond of sympathy.

Amos Wilder—virtually the only character in this book who really comes across—was a magnificent example of Life With Father. He provided Thornton with a good deal of strength and with an unending series of ideas, values, and expectations to rebel against. He seemed to incarnate American values before World War I, from the rugged determination to go his own way, to the ideal shared by so many of being a "whole man," to the almost incredible range of opinions registered on his scale of Christian optimism. The Wilder children, growing up in the 1920's, exchanged letters with this postscript: "DO NOT SHOW FATHER."

It is too bad that the reader has to extrapolate all this from the text, to note his

own discoveries of resemblance between Wilder and, say, Teddy Roosevelt, to think of his own reasons why abstinence and heroism and modesty and wholeness should, around 1910, have been such high bourgeois values.

The first part of the book is the only part in which some thesis seems about to be stated, in which some sense of the relationships of its subject's life seem to have some form. After that, there is much information and very little interpretation. One thing that is very helpful, however, is the generous coverage of Wilder's day-to-day career in the theater. He had to make a lot of changes in his text in order to accommodate critics, audience, and the fearsome Jed Harris, his producer-director. In fact, some of his changes were made for him (completely without consultation) by Harris. Theater historians will like those chapters which, although critically not very useful, provide details about casting, finances, performance, and the long combination of feuding and collaborating between Wilder and Harris.

There are some fabulous openers in *The Enthusiast* that are not followed up, though which would have been in a comprehensive biography:

Thornton often acknowledged his indebtedness to Freud, whom he met at the seventy-nine year-old's villa on the outskirts of Vienna that fall of 1935.

Between 20-30 I read all the great books in the French language; between 30-40, all the German; now it's been Spanish and Italian (the English went on all the time). Waves of excitement have gone over me continuously.

In a memoir, composer Mabel Daniels recounts that from the day he rather haltingly confessed that music was the real love of his life, she had known that Thornton was more than the ordinary amateur.

The Enthusiast shouldn't be ignored, but one ought to be aware of its limits and shortcomings. □

Of Women and Wanderlust

Elizabeth Arthur: *Beyond the Mountain*; Harper & Row; New York.

Blanche d'Alpuget: *Turtle Beach*; Simon & Schuster; New York.

Janet Turner Hospital: *The Ivory Swing*; E. P. Dutton; New York.

by Bryce Christensen

Home, as Robert Frost observed, is that place "where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in." But who are the "they" who wait there to take you in? Primarily, they have been women—wives and mothers, in particular. As husbands and fathers, men certainly help to define the home returned to, but their traditional responsibilities in supporting the family by laboring in the fields or marketplace and in protecting it by waging wars often prevent them from being there to take anyone in. Indeed, after extended toil, battle, or travel, men especially need someone waiting to take *them* in. In the poem in which Frost's definition is found, the man of the house is away when the Hired Man comes home to die; it is his wife who welcomes him to his last earthly rest. And in a far greater poem, the adventures of Homer's Ulysses find their end and purpose at the hearth kept by a loyal Penelope.

In the 20th century, however, the Hired Man better have a latchkey to let himself in, and if Ulysses ever gets back to contemporary Ithaca, he'll be lucky if with-it Penelope left a forwarding address before setting sail in pursuit of her own sexual gratification, professional fulfillment, or self-realization through global exploration. Thus our age is not likely to inspire a new *Odyssey*; rather it inspires empty and aimless feminist novels of the sort written by Elizabeth Arthur, Blanche d'Alpuget, and

Mr. Christensen is assistant editor of *Chronicles of Culture*.

Janet Hospital. As Homer did with Ulysses, all three writers take their protagonists traveling to exotic and dangerous places—Nepal in *Beyond the Mountain*, Malaysia in *Turtle Beach*, and India in *The Ivory Swing*. These works can hardly be mentioned in relation to the memory of the Ionian poet, but all three are skillfully written; *Turtle Beach* is the winner of the Seal Book Award and *The Ivory Swing* is the Age Book of the Year and is the recipient of the P.E.N. Golden Jubilee Award. Unlike the ancient Greek though, these women do not bend their narratives homeward. In this regard, they have a blind spot where Homer saw clearly.

As a haven where journeys may end, a locus of continuity for human relationships, home simply does not appear in these three novels. For home always means bonds: the bonds of spouses to each other, of parents to children, and of the family to a specific place and a specific tradition of social obligations. These are the "have to's" of Frost's lines. Liberation, especially in the militant

forms of women's liberation, means freedom through the breaking of bonds. Never mind what meaning may inhere in those bonds. Thus in *Beyond the Mountain*, the self-assertive heroine first experiments with adultery, then plans to leave her husband after joining an all-female mountain climbing expedition to the Himalayas. (His death in an avalanche before her departure makes her plans superfluous.) In *Turtle Beach* a syndicated Australian journalist chases around Southeast Asia, battering her reputation on the tragedy of the boat people while her marriage and home collapse. In *The Ivory Swing* Ms. Hospital describes her protagonist's husband as "cunning and wise as Odysseus," apparently little aware of the irony of making *his* Penelope not a faithful weaver who yearns for his return as she preserves the home and resists all suitors, but rather an outspoken writer who endlessly fantasizes about a former lover, despises the provincial college town where her husband has chosen to live, and longs to flee—alone if neces-

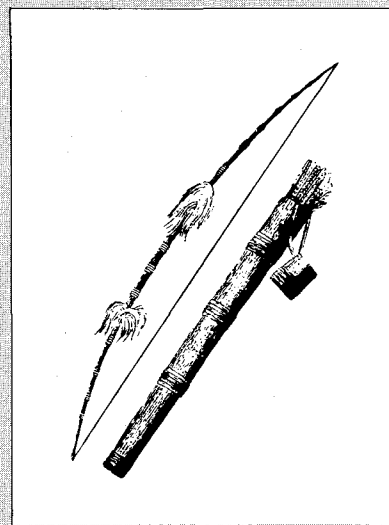
LIBERAL CULTURE

Metaphysics & Meteorology a la Time

A lady reporter from *Time*, assigned to essay Michael Jackson, the first demigod in history with a nose job, recorded her spiritual tremor for posterity in the pages of that sagacious magazine:

Michael and I shake hands. His hand feels like a cloud.

The literary acumen of *Time's* writers is, of course, known as the acme of our age's literature. There is a problem, however, with the precision of their metaphors. Does the above mean that the woman was transported to stratosphere, or that "a cloud" stands for ethereal bliss, or that Mr. Jackson's hand was damp? □



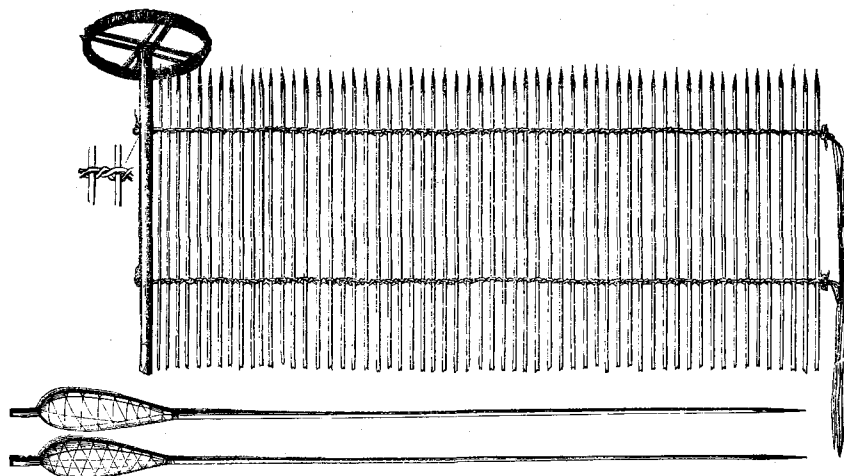
sary—to the intellectual stimulation of a metropolis.

Commitment to children does not appear much stronger or more satisfying in these novels than do ties to spouses. The mountaineeress of *Beyond the*

founded admiration when a Vietnamese woman feels strongly enough about her children to commit suicide for them. Hospital's Canadian author grudgingly acknowledges the need to stay with her children and at times experiences a kind

Western half-Buddhist, faces "the ultimate of fears, to be committed to something, someone, anything at all" while nearly freezing to death atop a Himalayan peak and consequently intuits a mystical union with everyone.

But societies and homes built below 20,000 feet can rest neither upon abstract commitment to anything nor upon mystical union with everything, regardless of how satisfying these airy substances may be to light-headed pantheistic monks and feminist writers. Clearly, the characters in these novels are deeply committed to certain things—a mountain, freedom, professional accomplishment, the advancement of women and humankind. Their attachment to specific people in specific places, especially the people they live with, are much more superficial and impermanent. Despite all the grief and uncertainty that invariably accompany tentative half-commitments within the family, these women are not willing to



Mountain has none. The career woman of *Turtle Beach* ignores hers as much as possible and totally baffles the reader by deciding in the conclusion to fight for custody of them. (If the sensible reader were allowed to serve as the judge in the case, he would rule against her.) The writer in *The Ivory Swing* does stay with her scholar husband, first in Ontario then in southern India, largely because of a sense of duty toward her children; however, she is imaginatively preoccupied with the attractiveness of other alternatives and with the difficulty of her own self-martyrdom. Not surprisingly, in the end she's not at all sure she can keep up the emotional trapeze act she imagines herself as performing with her husband and offspring: "Will we touch on the next inward arc? Or will we miss?" This kind of performance, necessarily done without a safety net, can easily reduce families to horrid splatterings in the public arena.

All three authors and their transparent creations do perceive the need for some kind of self-sacrifice and participation in a community. D'Alpuget's central character is haunted by a "sense of moral emptiness" and responds with dumb-

of epiphany in her experiences with them in nature. Arthur's climber, a

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture*:

Our Pluralism

"For about the past 15 years it has gradually been dawning on an increasing number of Americans that the people who rule their country are not entirely under their control. Bureaucracies enforce regulations no legislature ever passed; legislatures enact laws no voter ever wanted; judges pronounce decisions foreign to law and conscience; and the mass media express opinions no one else ever thought. . . . In the last generation certain key positions in the national elite have been unduly and rather cryptically influenced or captured by elements of an alien and hostile ideological faction. This movement of 'coercive utopians' harbors a profound hatred for the American establishment and for the mainstream of American life."

—from *"Americans, Operatives & Apparatchiks"*
by Samuel T. Francis

ALSO

Opinions & Views—Commendables—Waste of Money
In Focus—Perceptibles—The American Proscenium
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Confluences—A Prudent Progressive—Liberal Culture

Intellectual and moral elegance are not out of fashion...

During these times, *Chronicles of Culture* remains based on the proposition that ideas, attitudes, morals and manners still matter—even in a world that takes itself too seriously at one moment and reduces everything to trivialities the next.

At this juncture of history, *Chronicles of Culture* still insists that civilizations are built upon a specific vision of order and virtue. And that moral and social norms have never ceased to be their firmest moorings.

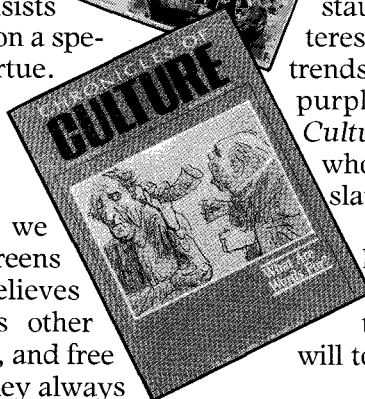
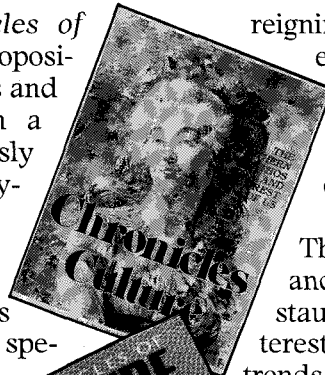
Even today—in spite of all we witness in print and on the screens—*Chronicles of Culture* believes that literature, art, various other modes of cultural expression, and free intellectual inquiry are, as they always have been, the best guardians of humane values. And that they must be defended, with substance and intensity, from the

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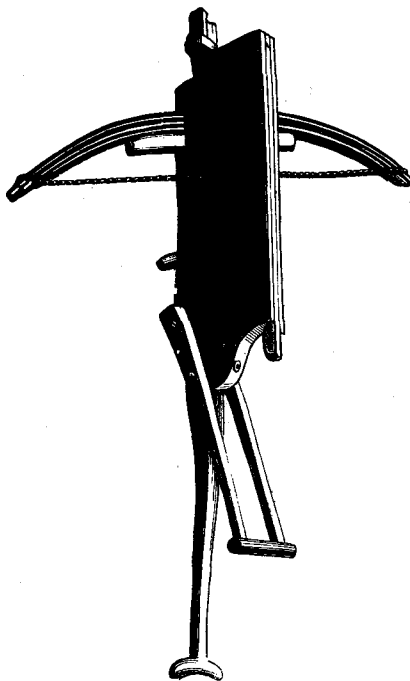


avoid such turmoil by giving themselves fully to those with whom they share their beds and houses. Always trying "to catch hold of my own life," each tenaciously resists letting others hold it. Each is afraid to love her husband wholeheartedly because of "fear that he would thus rule me, as if by remote control."

Not being tied down by a husband or children makes it easier for a woman to see the world, but it makes it impossible for her or her family to ever call any one piece of it her own. Since families without a homemaker must be families without a home, the social earthquake of radical feminism (measuring 9 or 10 on the Rich Her Scale) has left thousands of comfortably housed and well-fed Westerners homeless. Their plight evokes far less pity than that of the impoverished Southeast Asian boat people examined in *Turtle Beach*, but in many ways it seems more pathetically insoluble. Most of the Vietnamese who left their homes behind took with them an understanding of the importance of family bonds, and therefore they retained the essential power for building new homes in a different location. Westerners who have lost this understanding are the ones truly adrift, with no hope of ever building anything but suburban refugee camps for the spiritually rootless.

Consequently, though the women depicted in these books do maintain a residence, they are as little "at home" there as they are when confronted by the foreign cultures of the Orient. Thus, Ms. Arthur's protagonist dreams of the Himalayas when in Wyoming and has nightmares of Wyoming when in Nepal. Ms. D'Alpuget's journalist is neither more nor less at ease when sharing a house with her husband and children than when sharing a Malaysian tour with a handsome and knowledgeable Buddhist guide. Similarly, Ms. Hospital's woman on the swing feels as out of place in the "small college town musty with propriety and smugness and myopia" where she has lived for years with her husband and children as she does in Hindu India

where her spouse spends a year in sabbatical research. What she wants is to



live in a big city, *any* big city that offers "a gritty subway and freedom" and "the ferment of a circle of argumentative friends." The reader is reminded of the

world travelers T. S. Eliot portrays in "The Burial of the Dead," perpetual tourists of the soul, ever in search of someplace where "you feel free," but hopelessly sundered from the meaningfulness of being bonded to one place, one set of people, or one God.

It seems no accident that the heroine of *Beyond the Mountain* explicitly expresses a preference for a "nontheistic" religion and that the other two books nowhere allow for God to touch their characters. (D'Alpuget's protagonist does enter a church once—with an "Abortion on Demand" button on her lapel.) For it is perhaps only in religious ceremony that two people can authentically give themselves to one another, thus creating bonds of genuine union. True, besides the usual minister's fee, the cost of such bonds is a tremendous sacrifice of freedom, and that is a price modern women enamored of gritty subways and feminist clichés will never pay. And since the people joined in holy bonds are themselves flawed mortals, the home life thus secured will often prove less than celestial. But if these novels are any indication, the modern alternative is the hell of endless vagrancy. □

The Reaper with Steel-rimmed Glasses

Arnold Beichman and Mikhail S. Bernstam: *Andropov: New Challenge to the West*; Stein and Day; New York.

Vladimir Solovyov and Elena Klepikova: *Yuri Andropov: A Secret Passage into the Kremlin*; Macmillan; New York.

by T. Mark Kulish

On November 15, 1982, an overcast and cold day in Moscow, Leonid

Mr. Kulish writes from Denver, Colorado.

Brezhnev was buried. The new Soviet leader Yuri Andropov eulogized him from atop Lenin's tomb then led his fellow Politburo members to the other side of the mausoleum, where Brezhnev's wife and daughter bent over his corpse before the lid was fastened onto his coffin. Konstantin Chernenko, Brezhnev's close comrade and presumably his chosen heir, peered pathetically between the shoulders of Andropov and Premier Nikolai Tikhonov and muttered in an indecorous manner. Andropov, apparently in response to Chernenko's indignant entreaty, motioned the latter forward to stand nearly abreast with him.

As he glimpsed the visage of his ally and protector for the last time, the manifestly distraught Chernenko repeatedly puffed out his cheeks, and seemed to address Brezhnev directly. After the casket was lowered, the assembled dignitaries each cast a handful of earth into the grave. Most did so with a show of proper respect. Andropov, however, scooped up some earth and threw it upon Brezhnev's coffin with one quick, perfunctory gesture. Then he wheeled around, and strode briskly away.

What all this meant, one could only guess. How did Andropov emerge victorious? What were his political intentions? In the broad sweep of Soviet history, what did his accession signify? Did it mean nothing more than a continuation of stolid, bureaucratic totalitarianism, or was there something novel in the air?

Part of the answer lay hidden within the chambers of the Kremlin and within the minds of Andropov and his colleagues. Their respective ambitions, purposes, passions, and mutual rivalries remained a matter of careful and tentative speculation, since most of the available evidence was cryptic and ambiguous. Most of it, in fact, was rumor and gossip—but not all. There were, after all, certain facts and circumstances which could be established by sound research, facts no less revelatory for their being historically attestable.

The stated aims of Messrs. Beichman and Bernstam is to place the fragmentary and sparse available facts about Andropov's career into the context of the political and social history of the Soviet Union. Their success, given the difficulties and obstacles in their path, is remarkable, even if it extends only to the late 1950's. The final part of their narrative, concerning Andropov's career in the 1960's and 1970's, is sketchy and brief. It must be supplemented, for want of a better alternative, by the tendentious and rumor-mongering, though at times discerning, book by Vladimir Solovyov and Elena Klepikova.

The central concern of Beichman and

Bernstam is Andropov's place in the politics of the final phase of the Stalin era. They carefully delineate the genesis and ultimate rise to prominence of what they refer to as "the Brotherhood," a group of Soviet apparatchiki which included among its ranks Andropov, Mikhail Suslov, and Leonid Brezhnev. These men owed their collective ascent to two things: Stalin's Great Purge of the late 1930's, and the preparation of the scheme which Stalin conceived in the last phase of his life (1945-1953), and which, had he lived, he intended to realize in the mid- to late-1950's. Stalin planned to use these relatively young men to rebuild the war-ravaged communist party as a disciplined and far-flung instrument of totalitarian power. At the same time, he intended to use them to counterbalance and, ultimately, to eliminate the "old guard" of the existing Politburo, a group which he regarded with increasingly dark suspicion: Andrei Zhdanov, Georgi Malenkov, Vyacheslav Molotov, Lavrenti Beria, Kliment Voroshilov, Nikita Khrushchev, et al. Stalin desired a dependable elite of loyalists to effect his ultimate plans for the Communist Party and for Soviet society: a second Great Purge of the party, a new drive to further collectivize agriculture (i.e., a new mass terror directed against

the already decimated peasantry), a renewed attempt to establish a fully monolithic command economy, and, last but not least, a mass terror directed against Jews in the Soviet empire. The "discovery" of the fabricated "Zionist Doctors' Plot" in late 1952 and early 1953 was the harbinger of the new Great Terror to follow, a grisly enterprise whose first rank of overseers would have included Yuri Andropov.

Stalin's death in March 1953 derailed the scheme. The "old guard," animated first and foremost by the instinct of self-preservation, was quick to seize control and to disband and disperse, if only partially, the Brotherhood. Khrushchev gradually emerged as the preeminent figure among the new leaders, but the increasing vigor of his destalinization campaign and a fear of its possible consequences, as well as his personal desire for supreme power, aroused the hostility of his colleagues. In June 1957, Khrushchev, averting his own overthrow, deposed these colleagues, the "anti-party group," and sent them packing. Yet Khrushchev's victory was a Pyrrhic one. In overcoming the opposition of those with whom he had shared a mortal fear of Stalin's mounting distrust, Khrushchev was compelled to call upon

In the Mail

Cigarettes: The Battle over Smoking by Ronald J. Troyer and Gerald E. Markle; Rutgers University Press; New Brunswick, NJ. The best part of this scholarly text is an epigram from Oscar Wilde: "A cigarette is the perfect type of pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want?" The book, however, is "A Volume in the Crime, Law, and Deviance Series." So much for exquisite pleasure.

An American Saga: The Story of Helen Thomas and Simon Flexner by James Thomas Flexner; Little, Brown; Boston. James Thomas Flexner, a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award recipient, a writer who has created a body of works that would require a long shelf, a scholar whose four-volume biography of George Washington is being parlayed into prime time, has written a massive biography of his mom and dad. Admittedly, Mr. and Mrs. Flexner were rather extraordinary people (Mr. was a leading medical researcher; Mrs. had Bertrand Russell as a first cousin), but still, mom and dad they were.

Champions of Freedom, Volume 10; Hillsdale College Press; Hillsdale, MI. Economics à la von Mises, or ideas made interesting.

the very men whom Stalin would have used to annihilate him, his erstwhile colleagues. In 1957 the Brotherhood emerged from its partial eclipse, albeit in less cohesive form than when it had been guided by a single overpowering figure. Brezhnev, for one, joined Suslov in Khrushchev's ruling circle, and Suslov's influence expanded to fill the vacuum left by the departed "anti-party group." Andropov, thanks to his success in facilitating the suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 (during what was supposed to have been his diplomatic exile in Budapest), was given, at Suslov's instigation, the task of supervising relations with ruling communist parties in the Soviet bloc, China, and Korea. Andropov remained on the fringe of that ruling circle until 1967, when his appointment to the position of KGB chairman brought him de facto the status he was to assume de jure when named a full member of the Politburo in 1973.

When the Brotherhood toppled Khrushchev in 1964, it acquired the position of unhindered power that Stalin had planned, but it dared not carry out Stalin's final plan. Like Lenin's War Communism of 1917-1921, and like the collectivization, industrialization, and mass terror of the 1930's, the scheme which Stalin contemplated from 1946 to 1953 was one of *creating* totalitarianism, the act of forcing history and humanity into the mold of ideology. The Brotherhood lacked the fervor to attempt it anew. Instead they aimed to preserve what had already been established: the bureaucratic machinery of totalitarian coercion already in place. This preservative animus prevailed throughout most of the so-called "Brezhnev era," a period distinguished less by the preeminence of one purposeful leader than by the rule of a small oligarchy, in which Mikhail Suslov's influence was at least comparable to that of Brezhnev, the titular leader.

For Andropov, Suslov's death in January 1982 appears to have been the

catalyst for a plan to disrupt that oligarchy and to establish an order wherein the secret police would decisively prevail over the Communist Party. Beichman and Bernstam demonstrate that Andropov's associations with the system of concentration and slave-labor camps and with the state security apparatus were intimate after the 1930's, when he joined the Communist Youth League, or Komsomol—not just after he became KGB chairman in 1967. In 1982, Andropov was consciously fulfilling aspirations he had cherished throughout his career. He had tried out these aspirations in microcosm in the 1970's, by fostering the replacement of corrupt party regimes in Georgia and Azerbaijan with new rulers from the ranks of the KGB. One of the few sound achievements of Solovyov and Klepikova is to



describe in some detail these "experiments in the Caucasus" and to establish that Andropov instigated them.

If these "experiments" were any indication of Andropov's plans for the Soviet Union as a whole, it would be wrong to jump to the conclusion that Andropov, as one of the few remaining people fully cognizant of what Stalin wished to accomplish in the 1950's,

intended to pick up where Stalin had left off. Still, Andropov was not so timid as his brethren had been after Khrushchev's fall. While he did not attempt a revival of War Communism, Andropov, like his minions in Georgia and Azerbaijan in the 1970's, proceeded to use terror to attempt to restore discipline and to reduce corruption in the bureaucracy and among the citizenry. Terror was used to reinvigorate totalitarianism. Andropov's terror, though not as massive and pervasive as Stalin's, was a pronounced departure from the oligarchy's tolerance of sloth and venality.

To speculate on the ends of this style of ruling, one must begin by considering what motivated it. It is highly unlikely that Andropov was moved by a sincere dedication to Marxism-Leninism. Andropov and his brethren were, of course, the beneficiaries of the ideological zeal of Bolshevism, the inheritors of its totalitarian state apparatus, and they could only damage their own positions by allowing Marxism-Leninism to die a natural death. Yet it is unlikely that any of them, with the possible exception of Suslov, sincerely believed in that ideology. Andropov may have wished to appear a truer and more zealous Leninist than Brezhnev and his associates, but it was only the *appearance* that mattered. What lay beneath it? Great Russian nationalism? Not even Solovyov and Klepikova, who glibly account for the nature of the Soviet regime at its worst by asserting that it answers, by some ineffable and mystical mechanism, to the deepest yearnings of the Russian people, consider Andropov a Russian nationalist. Andropov's purpose, they believe, was naught else than the aggrandizement of immense power, with no further end in view.

This lack of fervent ideological or nationalistic purpose within the Soviet leadership and an all-consuming infatuation with power for its own sake was the ultimate consequence of the Brotherhood's ascent. Andropov, because of his roots in the security apparatus, was a complete embodiment of a devolution

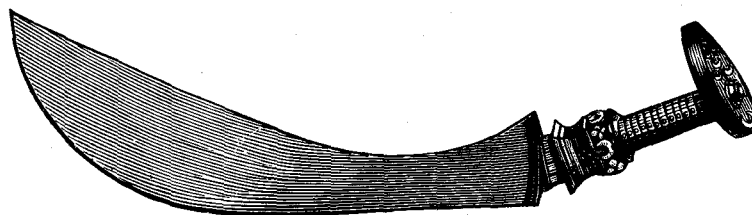
whose possible effects remain ominous in his absence. When simple power becomes the sole object of aspiration, the corruption which threatens to disintegrate the structure underlying that power cannot be measured by any standard to which the rulers might appeal, certainly not by that inhuman ideological standard to which they now pay only lip service. The exterminators of society's corruption themselves become corrupt in precisely the same vulgar sense as the society beneath them. This process, according to Solovyov and Klepikova, was already apparent in Georgia and Azerbaijan by the late 1970's. Such a tendency, if sustained, might set the stage for the disintegration, be it gradual or abrupt, of totalitarianism. An absence of integral, binding purpose at the center might engender a shift of power to a myriad of individuals who possess force and the will to use it purely for their own ends.

The emergence of such a state of affairs in the Soviet Union should come as no surprise. It is part and parcel of the human reality created from the beginning, at lower levels than the political stratosphere, by an ideological state striving to create a totalitarian social order. In *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn describes how the apparatus of terror created by the Communist Party to achieve its lofty ideological aims came to depend, at the level of the camps, on the *blatnye*, the "toughs," most of them thugs with no other passion than to lord it over their fellow inmates. The metaphysical corruption of communism was (to use a classic Marxist phrase) "inevitably reduced to" the mundane corruption of a simple, brutal lust for domination.

Was Andropov's rise to power, with its the obvious subordination, at least for the moment, of the party to the KGB, the signal of a new phase in Soviet history? Perhaps even the penultimate stage? What might follow? A prolonged continuation of the stagnant status quo? A collapse into anarchy? An attempt to

minister to decay within by pursuing a course of expansion without, based upon an appeal to the supposedly dependable nationalism of the Russian

decades of fearing to speak what they think, how can each know what the others are thinking, or even what he himself thinks? Is the Soviet regime any



people, in spite of all their misery and deprivation? The death of Andropov and his replacement by Chernenko have done nothing to clarify the answers to these questions, partly because the true character of the Russian people is still unknowable. It is hidden beneath a cloak of fear and isolation, woven by the methods, not so much of a Russian tradition of autocracy, as of totalitarianism—hidden even from the Russians themselves. After so many

more a natural manifestation of the Russian national character than the Khmer Rouge was a natural manifestation of the Kampuchean national character? However, one cannot overlook the possibility, suggested by Leszek Kolakowski, among others, that, dangerous though such a course of events might prove, "the collapse of the Soviet empire, far from being the ruin of Russia, is the necessary condition of her cultural rebirth." □

Notables

Benighted

Theodore C. Sorensen was Special Counsel to President John F. Kennedy. Camelot, of course, is gone, yet it lingers on the scene in a manner not unlike Cinderella's castle at Disney World on a foggy morn. Its King Arthur is departed, not to return from a misty isle in the Potomac. Sir Sorensen, having retired from the jousting turf, has now returned, though, armor rusted and creaking—but with *A Different Kind of Presidency: A Proposal for Breaking the Political Deadlock* (Bessie/Harper & Row; New York). The land is in dire straits, he intones, while wearing a mournful countenance. Alas, there are fire-breathing nukes, economic problems as vexing as the plague, threats from neighboring kingdoms. . . . He scratches out a pentacle (a favorite among the Druidic set) and prophesies that there are but five years to

the Day of Doom.

Hearken! He has a plan. Noting the words of those like Sir Hugh Sidey and Lady Flora Lewis, he not-so-humbly asks that the Round Table be convoked in the Oval Office in 1984—but an assembly with a difference. The sieges will be filled by both those who have sworn loyalty to their liege lord and foes, veritable political Mordreds. Instead of questing as individuals, for four years the government champions will roam in a pack, their gauntlets welded to one another.

See them depart for the Grail of Glory, plumes flying in the breeze! Imagine the dash and the vibrancy of the multitudinous newly engaged commissions-persons from all corners of the great land! Picture the mess when one fair knight's jambeau gets stuck in his solleret, he trips, and the whole gang takes a spill—but a spill with a difference, Sir Sorensen would say, one dignified by confidence and consensus. □

Ideological Time-Twisting

John Arden: *Vox Pop: Last Days of the Roman Republic*; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.

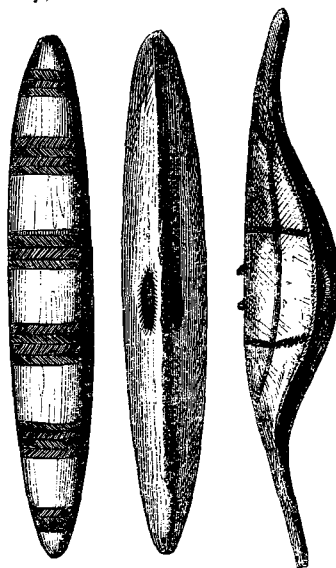
by E. Christian Kopff

The fact that John Arden has written a novel is important news for people who care about the health of the English language and its literature. As with his plays, the basic idea for the book is a good one, vigorously expressed in racy and idiomatic English; like most of his plays, the whole does not quite come off.

The story is set in the early years of the First Century, B.C., from about 91-81, a time for which the sources are scattered and confused, and which means, therefore, that an author, historian, or novelist, has considerable freedom to invent motives and adjust chronology. Arden takes full advantage of this necessary freedom. Roman domination of the Mediterranean, initially moral and restrained, was breaking down into the immoral rapacity of generals such as Marius and Sulla, the predecessors of Pompey and Julius Caesar, "the greatest brigand of them all," as Harvard's Ernst Badian has called him.

Ivory, the hero of *Vox Pop*, is a gimpy-legged theatrical agent and nostalgic extractor in Ephesus, a Greek city on the coast of Asia, modern Turkey. He becomes entangled with Irene, actress and secret agent of Mithradates of Pontus (A.K.A. "Strychnine"). Mithradates rules a barbaric dictatorship on the shores of the Black Sea from which he attempts to subvert the republican Roman Empire that dominates the Mediterranean. Ivory follows Irene to Italy, where he takes part in or witnesses many of the important historical events of the day and finally disappears, perhaps slain, in General Sulla's "conservative" proscriptions of 81, while Irene, safe in the arms

of Mithradates, uses his spy network to search for Ivory. Rome's "Old Crowd," represented by the brilliant but degenerate Sulla, love Greek art and admire, or, at least, tolerate the artists, but ultimately they are as ruthless and destructive as the "New Crowd," led by the brutal but popular general, Marius. Mithradates is also brutal and ruthless, we are merely told; Arden concentrates on Roman vulgarity, its suppression of a south Italian revolt (the Social War, or War of the Italian Allies of 91-89), and the massacres and proscriptions that Marius and Sulla visit on their political enemies. The narrative is punctuated by brutality, vulgarity, and aimless sex.



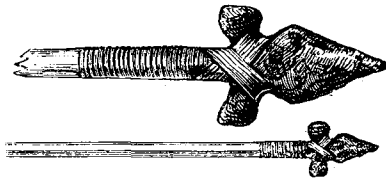
While the book is a relative failure, its author is of interest. During the 1950's Arden wrote plays for the state-supported Royal Court Theatre in London, all of which were initially financial failures. One of these plays, *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance*, (1959) is a tragedy about a 19th-century British soldier who turns against the British Empire after a "peace-keeping" atrocity and is destroyed by the violence he unleashes when he tries to awaken a British coal-mining community to its role in the horrors of imperialism. The play has

been repeatedly produced, has gained both financial and artistic success, and has become required text for English school children. Arden's plays are neo-Brechtian, indifferent to naturalism, wildly dramatic, sometimes preachy, sometimes heartrending. Their language ranges from vulgarity to song. His wife, Margaretta D'Arcy, is a leftist ideologue; under her tutelage his plays have become increasingly filled with "agit-prop," a term he uses with ironic approval in his prose. They now live in Ireland, D'Arcy's birthplace, and Ireland's past and present traumas with British imperialism occupy a large part of their work. (Ireland is also a country where proceeds from artistic endeavor are not subject to taxation, a useful location for those who must still dance to Sergeant Musgrave's tune.) Arden's cooperation with D'Arcy has not only resulted in an increase in the propaganda content in his work, but also in a break with Britain's state-supported theater, once the main backing for his work.

His plays are usually a strong mixture of leftist ideas and autobiography, and are often set in the past. For example, *Pearl*, a recent BBC-Radio play takes place at the time of the Great Rebellion against Charles I, involves denunciations of British policy in Ireland, and echoes in its plot Arden's and D'Arcy's problems with the state-supported Royal Shakespeare Theatre over their play, *The Island of the Mighty*. The most striking change in Arden's work, however, has not been its greater leftism or unmarketability, but its vision of men and women. Sergeant Musgrave is a classic Aristotelian flawed hero, who dominates the action and who is destroyed because he goes too far in his virtuous but singleminded obsession. The women are diverse. In more recent work, *Pearl* or *Vox Pop*, men who are not imperialists are gentle, artistic, and weak; the women are strong, ideological, wise, if at times with an evil wisdom. Above all,

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they are ruled by hate. Irene in *Vox Pop* loves Ivory, but her hatred of Rome is stronger and she is always subservient to the brutality and lust of the barbaric Mithradates, because "as long as he lives, the City dies a little." (This theme in



Arden's work is at times ludicrous. He and D'Arcy wrote a sequence of six plays on James Connally, a socialist who took part in the Dublin "Easter Rebellion" of 1916, *The Non-Stop Connally Show*. Connally outwits and out-argues all comers, especially stock figures of fun and hate such as the capitalist, Mr. Grapitall, but is refuted in argument with Rosa Luxemburg. If Arden ever writes on the Rosenbergs, he will have Ethel leading Julius around by the nose.)

Arden has said that he was turned into a full-fledged revolutionary socialist by a visit to India in 1969, where, on a search for the still-living roots of Indian popular theater, he confronted for the first time real poverty. But does a better argument for imperialism than India exist? British rule, once it moved past the Warren Hastings stage, was a blessing for India, whether one looks at the unification of the subcontinent, the introduction of English law, or just the abolition of Suttee. The result of turning over India to the famous fakir and his cynical successors included an avalanche of massacre and murder which has destroyed—and continues to destroy—countless lives, and the wrecking of any hope for economic progress. That India has not sunk into total chaos is largely the result of the survival of British customs and institutions, not the least of which is the English language itself. Ireland, is a harder case, but since a socialist religion is only another cover for exploitation, serious discussion soon bogs down in

complexity or gaily sails away into the thin air of Marxist abstractions.

Arden, an opponent of Western imperialism, selected what is, for him, an ideal period. From 91 to 31 B.C., the Romans took advantage of their empire in a cruel and immoral way. After 31, under the Emperor Augustus, they returned to the responsible customs that had preceded Tiberius Gracchus, some 100 years earlier. The peace, prosperity, and security that resulted was by no means unbroken and it finally collapsed, but it lingered in men's minds for a thousand years, inspiring such diverse people as Charlemagne and Dante. Rome fostered not only peace and prosperity, but artistic creations and, most importantly, even Christianity. In addition, earlier achievements, especially the masterpieces of Greek art, literature, and philosophy, survived because of Rome's empire and its responsible assumption and performance of its duty.

Roman atrocities—the numbers of people Marius and Sulla killed, for example—were real, but ought to be seen in the context of the alternative, Mithradates of Pontus, master, political and sexual, of *Vox Pop*'s dominating

figure, Irene. Although Arden sets the book during a low point of Roman rule, he must move the scene from Ephesus to Italy in a hurry because in 88 B.C. Mithradates arrived in Asia (Turkey) with his army and killed 80,000 men, women, and children. The victims of Roman brutality do not come near that number.

In the course of *Vox Pop* Ivory is drawn by Irene and her machinations away from his life in the theater and his mission of continuing and preserving the traditions of Western theater. By the end he has vanished. In *Vox Pop* Arden seems to be saying that all people—including himself—must turn away from Mithradates and Irene, the ideologues, and toward improving the imperfect world and its traditions. The goosestep of the triumphant ideologue has no room in its march for the crippled Ivory or the dancing Sergeant Musgrave, and John Arden may himself be limping back to recognition of that insight. If so, the relative failure of *Vox Pop* may be the harbinger of renewed success, of new beauty and its truth. It is the one thing the artist knows on earth, and in the face of the ideologues' murderous hate, it is, as Keats saw, all he needs to know. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

Our Giants of Art & Mind

Mr. Tony Richardson, a film director (*Tom Jones*), a British import of fraudulent goods so saliently contradictory to what we once knew about the quality of British textiles, comments on his newest product, the movie *Hotel New Hampshire*:

I don't think it's so much about incest, but about some people with a particular sexual hang-up that they have to get out of their system. . . I imagine there is good incest and bad incest.

Sooner or later, if things go the way they are going, his quandary may be answered by Ralph Nader, or the Consumer Protection Bureau. □



Down Home—& Out to Lunch

James Wilcox: *Modern Baptists*; Dial Press; New York.

Joan Williams: *Pariah and Other Stories*; Atlantic/Little, Brown; Boston.

by Fred West

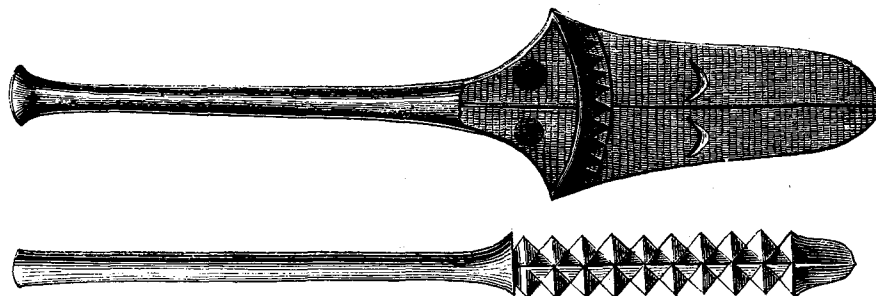
First novels can be wonderful events, given the shrinking market for fiction these days. In general, creative writers have hit the bottom of the totem pole, as indicated by the endless string of credits flashed before and/or after every TV production—which is where most of our “literature” originates today. Everyone, it seems, is credited before the writer, from the producer to the wigmaker for the leading lady to the errand boy. There are exceptions, of course, if the writer is a Herman Wouk or a James Clavell. Thus, when a novel is published, one hopes that it will be more than just the economic blockbuster the publisher prays it will be; one hopes that it will also be a marvelous adventure in language, thought, and entertainment. When the writer of the novel is a Southerner, he is, justifiably, compared with the great Southern writers. James Wilcox, the author of *Modern Baptists*, does not yet belong to that company.

A work of fiction should make some important statement about the human condition, or it should at least entertain. When it does both, the reader is rewarded and the writer is justified. Except in rare moments, *Modern Baptists* does neither. Again, those comparisons: when Erskine Caldwell writes about a rascal, though the character is not admirable nor one to be emulated, he still provides deep, gutsy laughs for the reader. Quite rightly, much humorous Southern writing has been called Rabelaisian. The title *Modern Baptists* suggests that we are going to be entertained by an up-to-date coterie of ol’ Southern down-by-the-riverside types. Though one feint is made in this direc-

tion by Wilcox, nothing really comes of it. The main characters, Mr. Perkins and his half-brother F.X., are losers. Good Southern writing has produced some of the weirdest weirdos in the business, but they are *interesting* curiosities. Faulkner, Caldwell, and O’Connor all made creations that are sometimes repellent but always intriguing. Mr. Perkins and F.X., however, are “of the glands,” in Faulkner’s words. Their griefs “grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars.” These two characters are not tragic enough for this to be a serious novel, nor are they funny enough for it to be consistently entertaining. Some writers have the ability to make their readers identify even with their villains, though we know they are rogues and should be punished or totally eliminated. As far as Mr. Perkins

foot fetish.” We have rejected bigger-than-life heroes; we have run the gamut of antiheroes; now we’re left with non-heroes. That is not the way to pump new blood into an endangered art form.

Joan Williams, too, writes about losers, but one can empathize with her characters, even though they sometimes arouse our anger and impatience when they take the wrong steps toward solving their problems. The settings of the stories in *Pariah* range from the not-so-distant past to the present, and most of the plots center on a familiar problem—the inability to communicate and adjust, particularly across generation or social gaps. Her stories are gems, each complete in itself but multifaceted, flashing additional suggestions and insights or



and F.X. are concerned, most of us would rather swim through snake-infested bayous at midnight than identify with either of them. To rely on Faulkner again, Wilcox writes “of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value.” When they are losing, we simply don’t care; when they are being funny, their acts sometimes turn into the uncomfortable performances of third-rate comedians who leave us more embarrassed for them than amused.

Perhaps if a distinctive Southern atmosphere came through meaningfully, or if some of the many loose ends of the plot were tied up, the story would tug more strongly at the reader. But the overall feeling is: So what? As one critic recently said, “We’ve developed a clay-

mirroring different reactions depending upon the views of the readers.

The title story “Pariah” is a tale of a familiar problem. The central character is a closet alcoholic, a modern housewife overcome by boredom and lacking sufficient initiative to make her life worthwhile. She is a rotten mother to her two children, a sloppy housekeeper, an unattractive mate to her husband, and a pariah to her former friends. Williams does not condemn or condone; she presents the story with such skill and realism that the reader is involved. But as important as the plot are those twinkling facets, barely suggesting that in an earlier time, without the gadgetry of the modern household, the woman would have been so busy making a home,

Dr. West writes from Whitsett, NC.

raising the kids, caring about the needs of a husband, that she would not have had time to be bored. Or a reader might reflect that, given that the character is so

futile, which tie him to the seasonal rhythms of farming.

Two of the stories, "The Morning and the Evening" and "The Sound of Silence,"

"Modern Baptists" [is] startlingly alive... Mr. Wilcox is a writer to make us all feel hopeful."

New York Times Book Review

far gone that her frustrated husband might do what many modern husbands do, file for divorce and custody of the children, a judge would almost invariably, without weighing the merits of the case, award custody of the children to the incompetent mother, thus aggravating the problems of all concerned.

Four of the stories are about race relations in the New South. Here again, the facets are as alluring as the plots themselves. "Going Ahead" presents young Tad and Grandpa, two rural Southerners driving into town to see Santa Claus. Integration is still recent, and in the imagination of many of the older generation of whites there is danger of violence from the blacks. In Grandpa the real dilemma of integration is crystallized, the ambivalence of the Southern white toward his black neighbors. He is not a "redneck nigger-hater." Grandson Tad points out, "You've sat next to Negroes before"; Grandpa has often sat beside the field hands in trucks and broken open watermelons in the field and eaten with them. But he cannot cope with the situation when a black sits down on the stool next to him at a lunch counter. Like so many old-timers, Grandpa feels a sense of noblesse oblige toward "his" Negroes, but, in his view, they "know their place." As he tells his grandson, "They've never set to the table with me." He is irrevocably set in his patterned beliefs. The same response holds true for the black Jesse, in the story of that name. Jesse suffers the poverty and frustration typical of so many Southern sharecroppers, white and black. Yet, when he is given the broad opportunity to escape the grinding existence and move into the world of regular labor and regular pay, he simply cannot break his old patterns of behavior, however

are about Jake, that most Southern of grotesques, the community half-wit. Since Williams is hailed as the protégée of William Faulkner, it is inevitable that a comparison be drawn between Williams's Jake and Faulkner's Benjy. Repellent in some ways, both these mentally retarded creatures are still sympathetic, although it would be a mistake to use the abused term "compassionate" to describe Williams's presentation. Her carefully crafted prose is too objective to hint of sentimentality. And yet the reader is enthralled; like Coleridge's Wedding Guest,

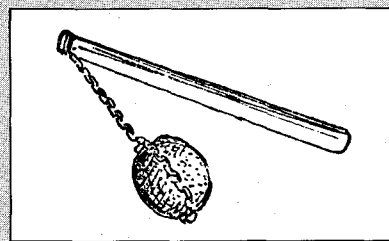
he "cannot choose but hear," and ultimately be touched.

Many of the Southern greats seem naturally possessed of the magical essence of language, the primal incantatory quality so characteristic of Faulkner and so uncontrolled in Thomas Wolfe, which enchants the reader (originally, listener) by its sonorous rhythms as much as by its meaning. Williams's prose is restrained and more consciously artistic. It is spare, with the precise word or phrase to evoke the desired image or sound or smell in the mind of the reader. In only two of the stories does her deftness falter: in one story her lean prose becomes a bit too meager, and another, the shortest of the collection, has the artificial neatness of O. Henry at his worst. But the balance of *Pariab* more than makes up for any lapses in this talented woman's storytelling. □

Notables

Seriousness

With the novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (Harper & Row, New York), Mr. Milan Kundera, a noted Czech author, establishes himself as a voice of literary seriousness, so rare amidst the din of semiadolescent memoirists who, these days, massively peddle their graphomaniac exploits as fiction. First of all, Mr. Kundera presents the reader with an intellectually digested substance—an interrelation between the written word and the knowledge of reality: it was once called the writer's vision and was predicated on his or her moral and emotional responsibility. He then gives it a form—a free-flowing narrative that strips to the bare bone the best elements of fiction: thought, introspection, reflection, wisdom, narrative digression into matters of philosophy and history, cognitive explanations, the sophisticated succinctness of expression and description. Marvelously rich, glittering simplicity, pregnant with meaning and precision, reigns supreme. Mr. Kundera's subject is male and female vulnerability (each in subtly delineated



and individualized situations) as cast against the modern quotidian reality of the contemporary culture in Europe. The European actuality of both the communist crucifixion of reason and dignity, as well as of the Western European facilitation of decay are deftly interwoven into much more delicate matters of human frailty and fecklessness than those known by most people from their daily experience. Compared to Mr. Kundera's sensitivity and fairness in judging man, woman, epoch, and the updated human nature, most of our minions of literary reviewers and critics look either like talk-show blabbers, embarrassingly intoxicated pub-counter raconteurs, or cheap confessors of deeply internalized banalities. □

COMMENDABLES

Be True to Your School

Ernest L. Boyer: *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*; Harper & Row; New York.

by Carlisle G. Packard

In 1955, two-thirds of Americans asked by a Gallup poll indicated that they would be willing to pay more taxes if the increase were applied to raising teachers' salaries. In 1980, only 30 percent indicated such a willingness. Why? One reason is that Americans are more heavily taxed today than they were 25 years ago. The principal reason, however, is the decline in the quality of American education. As a result of this decline, standardized test scores for high school students have fallen steadily over the last two decades. Between 1963 and 1980 average verbal scores on the SAT dropped over 50 points and average math scores dropped nearly 40 points. *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* gives recommendations for the reform of American education and thus attempts to reverse the decline in standards of contemporary schooling. Written by Dr. Ernest L. Boyer, a former U.S. Commissioner of Education, and funded by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, this volume is informative and invaluable for educators and citizens who are interested in educational reform. Dr. Boyer's work is a complement to the National Commission on Excel-

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lence in Education report, *A Nation at Risk*.

The political activities of the 1960's spawned two influential ideas about schooling. The first was opposition to "elitism," which resulted in a refusal to define the attributes of an educated person. Who was to say that the sociology of sex roles was not as vital to understanding as the study of British literature or that John Milton was superior to Norman Mailer? This antipathy to elitism caused a crisis of resolve and undermined the standards of liberal education. Then there was the insistence on relevance, which eliminated much that was in the school curriculum and replaced it with contemporary trash which students could "relate to." *High School* rejects these follies and defines a minimum high school education for *all* students, (college-bound and vocational), including English every year and at least two years each of math and a foreign language. This recommended curriculum is based on the premise that language is central to a decent education and a productive life.

While it is true that some students are better suited to a liberal education than others, this division should not be made too early. Literature is undoubtedly the best way to teach both literacy and morals, but it might be assumed that its appeal would be limited, especially with regard to impoverished, vocation-oriented, and uninterested students. *High School*, however, provides examples that show that secondary education can be

attained regardless of the student's social background. This has been accomplished in some inner-city schools, written off by many, because principals have had the imagination to overcome parental apathy and teachers have had the courage to insist on high standards.

Some problems will not be readily overcome, especially those associated with money. Some of the recommendations in *High School* are very costly. For example, Dr. Boyer recommends pay increases of 25 percent beyond inflation over the next three years for teachers, and that they should have only four formal class meetings per day. Further, those who teach writing should have no more than 20 students per class as well as a

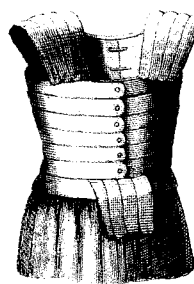
reduced load so that they can feel free to assign much writing and have time to grade it. The list could go on. These are desirable conditions but, considering the present state of public funding, they are highly unrealistic.

Also troubling are the author's repeated recommendations for Federal funding. He admits that "the impact of federal legislation and the courts on the daily operations of schools has been immense. Many districts have felt overwhelmed by the seemingly endless specifications, regulations, and detail." Washington attaches many strings to its beneficence and is little afraid to direct the schools to be used as social laboratories, resulting in the degradation of the neighborhood school ideal. □

Straight Talk

Erika Holzer: *Double Crossing*; G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

On a fairly regular basis, presumably provoked by historical necessity, the leaders of the Soviet Union see to it that tractor-trailers are hooked up, tanks fueled up, and jets sent up. The



objective is to regale the Soviet people—and the rest of the world—with the might of the ABM-1B Galosh antiballistic missile, the FROG missile, the Tupolev strategic manned bombers, and so on, as the weapons parade on and above Main Street, U.S.S.R. Given

the facts that one Galosh weighs some 32,700 kilograms—or 72,000 pounds—and that military tank treads are harder on paved surfaces than the tire chains that are all but outlawed on U.S. roads, one might imagine that there are quite a few potholes along Moscow's center strip. The Politburo leaders don't seem to mind: it's the price one pays to brag. The people probably don't mind too much, either: after all, not too many of them go cruising around downtown Moscow in the cars that they don't own, anyway. Besides that, which of them would complain? The roads in Siberia are ice-hard.

The Soviet parades of power don't hide the fact that the ultimate recipients of the tons of steel, titanium, and uranium are not Afghan rebels, uppity Chinapersons, nor dissenting Poles; the payloads will be delivered in the U.S. Subtlety is not the Soviets' long suit when it comes to pumping military iron. When they're not singing praise about the parades, *Pravda*, *Tass*, and

the other Cusinards of truth are accusing the U.S. of all manner of nastiness. If the U.S. was responsible for even half of the things that it is accused of being behind, then the American state would be omnipotent and the Soviets wouldn't have a chance, Galoshes notwithstanding.

In the U.S., one dares not utter any remark that could be construed as indicating a sense of bellicosity against our Soviet foes (oops!). This is especially the case for elected officials. If Ronald Reagan pulled off a Tony Lama boot in the privacy of his own ranch house and pounded a table with it while muttering something about applying reverse archaeology to the Soviets, an abominable journalist like, say, Mr. Seymour Hersh would find out about it, and impeachment proceedings would be initiated, post haste. And while the "official news agency" in the Soviet Union can invent all kinds of bizarre stories about the CIA, FBI, etc., even writers of pot-boiler fiction in the U.S. seem compelled to be benign to the enemy in their novels. As soon as an Ivan or a Boris shows up, the reader can be certain to find a melodramatic rendering of a tough childhood on the tundra and a fulfillment of potential through service for the KGB. The American agent, contrariwise, will, even if he is the putative hero, tends to be the product of a spoiled upbringing.

An exception to this novelistic, tacit, party line comes from Erika Holzer in her *Double Crossing*. While her prose style, the plotting, characterization, and other formal elements are ordinary, her thesis is extraordinary—no, not her thesis, but her willingness to state a fact that everyone, both in the West and in the East, knows full well: that the Berlin Wall wasn't built and subsequently fortified, on a regular basis, with offensive weapons pointing eastward—

not westward—in order to halt the movement of lovers of the people's utopia from heading into the German Democratic Republic and points beyond. To underline this fact, Holzer places one such starry-eyed dreamer behind the barbed wire, mines, attack dogs, and other deadly impediments and shows how

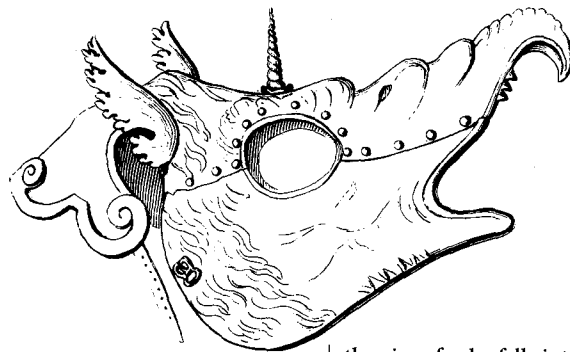
anxious he is to get out. Moreover, the KGB agent and the DDR security colonel are shown to be psychological misfits; those who struggle for freedom are characterized as being normal. Ms. Holzer won't win any writing awards for *Double Crossing*, but she at least deserves a medal for bravery. □

Of Doughnuts and Decadence

Bernard Semmel: *John Stuart Mill and the Pursuit of Virtue*; Yale University Press; New Haven, CT.

Freedom is like a doughnut, characterized both by what is there, the cake, and by what is not, the hole. The hole in freedom is the freedom *from*—from

what they were free *for*, other than VD, obscene slogans, and drug abuse. Though highly priced and loudly touted, this airy new pastry has demonstrated real disadvantages over its predecessor: for one thing, trying to dunk the new version is terribly frustrating because the hole is far bigger than most java mugs and



persecution, from coercion, from imprisonment. The cake is the freedom *for*—for religion, for artistry, for family life, for education. For over two centuries, the dual dimensions of the American doughnut have made it the best in the world, enjoyed—generally with coffee—in churches, studios, bungalows, and schools. Over the past two decades, however, the doughnut most visible on the American scene has been mostly hole, as defiant rebels have declared their freedom *from* practically everything—bourgeois morality, orderliness, tradition, courtesy, hygiene—without ever defining exactly

the rim of cake falls into rancid crumbs at the slightest touch. Worst of all, household pets who eat the leavings that hit the floor end up very sick.

As a Victorian Britisher, John Stuart Mill was more accustomed to tea and crumpets than coffee and doughnuts. Nonetheless, those who have so perfidiously altered the character of the once-satisfying American paradigm have often claimed they got their recipe from him. Certainly the author of *On Liberty* never underestimated the importance of freedom *from*. However, Bernard Semmel convincingly demonstrates in his new study of Mill's thought that

Mill was actually a whole doughnut man, not a doughnut holer. By showing that Mill was fully committed to freedom *for* the self-cultivation of virtue, Semmel proves that he was "distinctly more conservative than he has generally been depicted" by those who remember only the negative part of his vision of ideal freedom. But as any lover of genuine freedom or good doughnuts knows, empty space should serve only to provide a grip for fingers holding on to better things. (BC) □

Seasonable Sanity

Richard Nixon: *Real Peace*; Little, Brown; Boston.

By the standards espoused by many progressive moderns, Utopia was anything but utopian. Civil libertarians who rail against the inadequacies of the extant penal system would find that flawed system far preferable to Sir Thomas More's plan for putting criminals (especially adulterers) into "bondage" until "they have been broken and tamed with long miseries." Similarly, skeptics scornful of such public expressions of American piety as the Apollo astronauts' reading from the Bible or the use of Scripture in Presidential inaugurations would not soon relocate in More's fabled land, where anyone who does not believe in immortality and divine judgment is recognized neither as a man nor as a citizen. And whatever feminists may find wrong with contemporary culture, they would be loathe to embrace More's vision of a state where every month "the wives fall down prostrate before their husbands' feet at home... confessing and acknowledging themselves offenders either by some

actual deed, or by omission of their duty, and desire pardon for their offense." Indeed, though *Utopia* has provided us with a rubric for the perfect, unrealized society, those presently most dedicated to utopianism disdain almost everything its author stood for, except perhaps his collectivism, radically reinter-

humane and valuable features of terrestrial reality, including the American freedoms permitting fidelity without martyrdom, from disappearing either into a nuclear fireball or into the communist dystopia of Soviet hegemony. In *Real Peace* he argues with incisive logic and clarity for a "hard-headed detente" which



preted. But if More's ideas do not belong to our age, they did not fit well in his own either. Sixteenth-century monarchs ignored rather than applied More's precepts and finally executed More himself when his unwavering religious integrity conflicted with political expediency. Like other saints, More belonged to heaven and eternity; he could never be anything but a stranger, pilgrim, and martyr in the temporal world.

Richard Nixon has written no *Utopia* and though his sins have been grossly exaggerated by the media, he is not likely to be canonized. Nonetheless, few contemporary statesmen excel him in understanding what is required to prevent the most

combines renewed Western resolve and cooperation, greater military strength, strategically orchestrated trade, intelligent negotiation, and global propagation of American ideals. He also shreds the myths of the naive pacifists who seek peace through a nuclear freeze, disarmament, world government, expanded trade, or conciliatory "understanding." Though lacking the timeless elements of style and content which have made *Utopia* a classic for centuries, Nixon's book offers acute insights into today's realities, insights which could help to ensure that there *are* future centuries of books and free readers. (BC) □

Affirming America

Bud Shuster: *Believing in America*; William Morrow; New York.

Officially, the early-19th-century doctrine of Manifest Destiny, whereby the United States was divinely destined to expand triumphantly in geography, wealth, and influence, is very much out of intellectual

favor. However, during the last two decades something like the mirror image of this doctrine has been popular among leading academics, journalists, and commentators, who feel that because of its alleged racism, imperialism, and economic inequities America is inexorably fated to suffer international humiliation and domestic tur-

moil. Our victory in the Mexican-American War in the last century and our ignominious defeat in Vietnam ten years ago suggest that either version of this doctrine, if widely accepted, may fulfill itself as historical reality.

Having seen quite enough of neo-Manifest Destiny, Congressman Bud Shuster persuasively reminds us of the just and humane reasons for believing in something closer to the original formulation. Answering "the drumbeats of the negativists and nihilists," he marshals hard evidence to demonstrate that in economics, in social mobility, in education, and in freedom, America is still the global leader, providing unprecedented opportunities for its own citizens and precious hope for all the peoples of the world. Nonetheless, future progress will require Americans to reverse some dangerous

tendencies in government spending, in public education, in defense posture, and in cultural attitudes. Congressman Shuster's emphasis on patriotic confidence as the key to all of these problems may make his book seem overly simplistic and therefore inferior to heavily footnoted works written from a different perspective. But too much intelligence informs this former computer expert's fervor to dismiss it as mere sloganeering. Though the pedants promoting a destiny of decay try to obscure the fact, every analysis of the American ethos and its future, no matter how scholarly or rigorous, necessarily rests on unprovable premises requiring some leap of faith. Congressman Shuster would have Americans leap to yet higher ground; others would prefer that we all plunge into the abyss. □

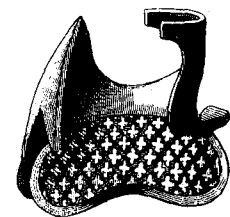
Of Marriage and Monticello

Jan Lewis: *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia*; Cambridge University Press; New York.

What did Jefferson have in mind when he added "the pursuit of happiness" to the Declaration of Independence's short list of inalienable rights? Critics such as George Will have charted a host of dire consequences arising from this peculiar, seemingly hedonistic phrase. Yet Jan Lewis, a historian at Rutgers University with a passion for old Virginia diaries, suggests instead that Jefferson may have been groping toward identifying and understanding a new sentimentality then taking root in America.

In the four decades after the American Revolution, she argues, the pursuit of happiness led American men and women home. Dying out was the old patriarchal

family, focused on lineage and characterized by a rigid formality in parent-child relationships. Replacing it was a new domestic model, focused on love, the home, and children, where "family" became the central forum in which individual lives found meaning.



Even among erstwhile Southern gentry, Lewis declares, new and recognizably middle-class values took root. As she writes:

Virginians who rhapsodized about the family were creating and reinforcing an article of faith for their society, a

belief perhaps more central to their lives than any other. Surely, their ideal of family partook of myth . . . Nonetheless, Virginians often found that the ideal of the perfect family was in fact the image of their own family.

The Americans so engaged joined with other inhabitants of the North Atlantic world "in refashioning the family for the modern age." Men gave more attention to their wives and

children. The new importance attached to the domestic sphere "necessarily enhanced the position of women." The distinctive American family—that institution which so impressed Alexis de Tocqueville during the 1830's—had been born.

In an age which sometimes rhapsodizes over the "strength" of "single parent," "communal," and "gay" families, this little volume reminds us just how far we have fallen. (AC) □

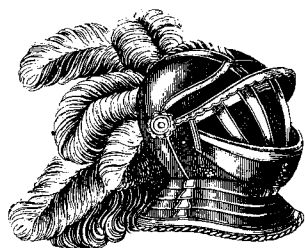
IN FOCUS

Aloof and Awry

George H. Douglas: *Edmund Wilson's America*; The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

Henry David Thoreau went to Walden Pond, so he told the world, to get away from people. But the reader of *Walden* may wonder with James Russell Lowell if Thoreau is not just a poseur who actually wants "a seclusion which keeps him in the public eye." That is, Thoreau desired not only to be apart from and above his fellow Americans, but he also wished to enjoy their admiration and attention for his separateness. "There is something delightfully absurd," observed Lowell, "in six volumes addressed to a world of such 'vulgar fellows' as Thoreau affirmed his fellowmen to be."

Like Thoreau, Edmund Wilson played the part of a superior loner with a large audience. Though he spent his writing career "interested in and involved with the United States," he did so entirely as an individual, not as part of a religious, philosophic, or political community. As the title of George H. Douglas's study suggests, it was always Edmund Wil-



son's America, not America's Edmund Wilson. As Dr. Douglas notes, Wilson's criticism and fiction evinced a "highly idiosyncratic personality, always somewhat estranged from his native land, somewhat out of joint with it." At times, Wilson's personal independence afforded him a vantage point from which he offered eminently sane perceptions, as when he inveighed in *The Fruits of the MLA* against the pedantic absurdities of literary academicians. But too often, Wilson's aloofness prevented him from understanding his subjects as well as those Americans whom he presumed to lecture on them. Even Dr. Douglas, whose evaluation of Wilson seems overgenerous, admits that in his infatuation with Marxism during the 1930's, Wilson "had rather too easily given up on the

American system." Though Wilson outgrew this foolish infatuation, his attitude toward his own country and countrymen never did mature into even an average sense of national commitment or patriotism. For almost 10 years he filed no income tax returns and in his introduction to *Patriotic Gore*, published only 10 years before his death, he depicted America as just as oppressive to its citizens and to other lands as is the Soviet Union. Even if talented, as Wilson was, when a writer reaches such ludicrous conclusions because of self-imposed isolation, he ought to keep them to himself—or share them only with the wild loons described in *Walden*. (BC) □

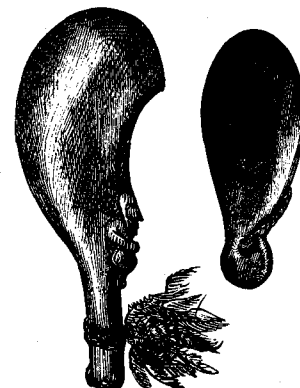
Mirror, Mirror

Nora Johnson: *The Two Of Us*; Simon and Schuster, New York.

Individuality seems to be the key word today, and growing up in a world where no one is willing to conform can be a most difficult task. Growing up as identical twins in this "I gotta be me" world can cause deep-seated feelings of contempt that may mar forever the relationship of such matched sets of bookends.

From the moment of birth identical twins are treated only slightly kinder than circus freaks by otherwise well-meaning persons. They are immediately labeled "the twins" by those who can tell no difference between the two children and do not want to be embarrassed by calling one by the other's name. The parents of the twins, however, are the greatest participants in the attempt to make two persons into one by insisting on calling the children by poetically rhyming names, dressing them like matching pandas, insisting that they be enrolled in the same classes upon entering school,

and encouraging them to share the same circle of friends. To



parents, grandparents, and the general populace, everything about the twins is "cute." For the twin, however, this condition of being so like another person, seeing yourself at all times without benefit of a mirror, being referred to and spoken to as a unit, basically treated as though joined to your sibling at the hip, is not fun at all. On occasion, it can be traumatic.

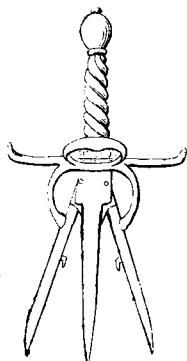
In *The Two Of Us*, Nora Johnson does an exemplary job of showing the effects that these very tactics can have on twins. She takes the relationship of Cassie and Celia Armstrong from early childhood to late adulthood and shows the extremes that they go to to be as "unlike" as possible. Though a work of fiction, many twins will see themselves in the pages of Ms. Johnson's book; hopefully, so will their parents. (KW) □

Writing at the Bar

Allen Drury: *Decision*; Doubleday, New York.

Literature—structural studies and attendant quibbles notwithstanding—is the almost-miraculous result of a synergistic confluence of form and content. Those works that are produced

with form and only form in mind are shells—perhaps striking, but still hollow. When content is paramount, propaganda and/or paltry storytelling is the result. Allen Drury hit the mark with *Advise and Consent*, his 1960 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, though, Mr. Drury has, it seems, eschewed formal considerations for the sake of making his point. Admittedly, what he has to declaim is laudable: the criminal justice system in America, the gears of which grind more slowly than those in hell, requires the judicious application of lubrication if it is to continue to function in the contemporary polity. However, the means through which he states this has more in common with a TV miniseries than with even the most rudimentary form of literature. □



Beneficent Bondage

Christine Sutherland: *The Princess of Siberia: The Story of Maria Volkonsky and the December Exiles*;

Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

In the years since the announcement of the institutionalized "sexual revolution," it has become increasingly clear that the individual, unfettered rutter is an absurd and meaningless creature. Because meaning inheres only in loyalties, commitments, *bonds*, "liberation" is

empty when it takes the sundering of bonds as its self-sufficient end and not as the necessary preparation to the creation of voluntary but deeper bonds. Such liberation can bring no solace to the soul—though it may provide AIDS for the body. Until fairly recently, most people understood this well enough to sacrifice willingly a large portion of their liberty in order to create, "for better or for worse," the human meanings possible only within "the holy bonds of matrimony." Maria Volkonsky, the woman whose life Christine Sutherland competently narrates in *The Princess of Siberia*, had only been married a year when her husband was sent to prison in Siberia for his part in the unsuccessful Decembrist revolt against the czar in 1825. Guided by "marital loyalty, love, and a feeling of moral obligation," Maria chose to join her spouse in Siberia. Life in that bleak setting was harsh and difficult, devoid of the luxuries Maria had grown accustomed to as a pampered Russian aristocrat. But her willingness to honor her marriage vows by enduring such privation freed her husband from despair and probably from premature death. Malibu swingers may be more liberated than this woman, but their existence adds up to far less. (BC) □

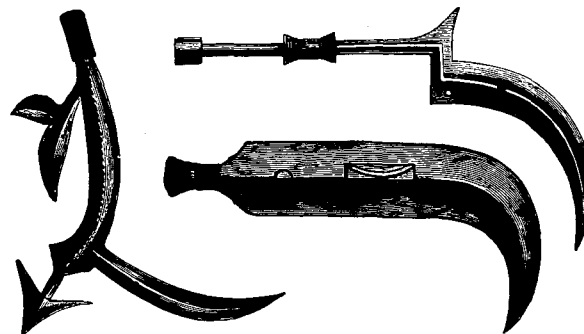
Perceptibles

I. Grekova: *Russian Women: Two Stories*; Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich; New York.

Judy Blume: *Smart Women*; G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

During the "sexual revolution" in Russia in the 1920's, writer Alexandra Kollontai acquired notoriety for her "glass

of water" theory, according to which "love was but [a] sexual urge akin to thirst, with the quenching of either a trivial enough matter." This theory was snatched by American intellectuals who were smitten by their



pro communist ardors; some of its consequences can be discerned in epidemic proportions in the behavioral reality in this country today. Ms. Grekova, in her short stories about Russian women, makes it clear what happened to Ms. Kollontai's theory in the Soviet Union of today. She has no apparent need to use sex as a glass to hold her readers' attention and shows that Russian women—even those who are professionally successful—place as their first priority traditional wifely roles: they treat their men not only with respect, but with outright deference, and practice unquestioned obedience and fidelity. If they were not Russian, Soviet, and communist, *Ms. Magazine* would declare them genocidal maniacs and humanity's Public Enemy No. 1.

If, on the other hand, characters like those in Judy Blume's latest novel are to be believed, *all* American women have cast conventional mores—marriage, husband, children, and home—out to sea in an uncorked bottle. Actually, she talks about herself only, unable to transcend her own poky self-cum-experience—which makes her "novel" a non-novel. Ms. Blume sips at a cocktail consisting of Perrier and

pollutants as she moves her characters from hot tubs to steamy bedrooms. This author, best known for her children's stories, can only portray adults as animated reproductory organs whose greatest need is to find

anyone with the required equipment for a quick roll in a king-size waterbed. Such efforts deserve to be submerged. (KW) □

* * *

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*; University of Minnesota Press; Minneapolis.

When the book emerged from the bellows of the Viking Press in 1977, *The New Republic* remarked, "*Anti-Oedipus*, more than any other intersection of Marx and Freud, renders palpable the metaphor of the unconscious as a worker, and does it in a brilliant, appropriately nutty way." Candy bars are appropriately nutty, not books inflated with a preface by the likes of M. Michel Foucault—or so we always thought. A look into the translated Gallic babble results, however, in a recognition that texts can be *beyond nutty*. Lunacy is one of the subjects of the two literary au courant demisavants; given their proximity to the subject and the evidence in *Anti-Oedipus*, we suspect that it's catching. □

WASTE OF MONEY

Spent Fireworks

Allen Wier: *Departing as Air*; Simon & Schuster, New York.

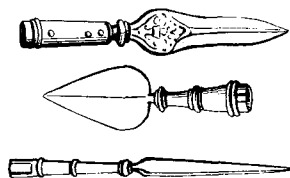
by Dennis R. Perry

Critic Allen Tate once commented that the epic could not be written in a society without common values. Allen Wier's *Departing as Air* unfortunately—and unintentionally—reminds us that if there is a basis for fiction in our society, it is based on the common nonbelief system of many of our writers who, with an increasingly complex barrage of ambiguous and ironic metaphysical puzzles, proclaim in their work the inability of modern man to sort out any absolute meaning from his environment. This epistemological dilemma began when writers of the romantic self-culture of the 19th century thought that they could look inward to discover Truth. Thoreau and Wordsworth, for example, attempted to synthesize the correspondences between the natural and spiritual worlds in order to perceive the divine underpinning of reality. In the current backwash of a romantic literature, much of what has since worn thin as merely an indulgent secular religion of the self has evolved away from the search for a divine self and toward the search for a more earthy one. The result of this less-than-lofty aim has been an intellectual flesh-peddling in which the search for Truth has become the search for Sensation.

This conspicuous concern for

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the body, which borders on worship, is only a part of Wier's self-consciously modern arsenal of violent and hallucinogenic imagery. These devices betray Wier's narrative, which becomes a collection of mere effects, the objective of which is to gratify or titillate a reader's baser instincts. The result is a commercial substitute for organically realistic fiction. During the 19th century the charge of effectism usually applied to the sentimental fiction produced by what Hawthorne called that "mob of scribbling women." Today it applies to the almost orthodox iconoclasm that ritually exposes what the early sentimentalists dared only intimate. Wier, for example, details the unstable mental ramblings of an old woman recalling her libertine history, by utilizing every gratuitous effect possible within the loose boundaries of today's tastes. The aim here—as



elsewhere—seems to be to distract from his otherwise thin structure and characterization. Consequently, the novel's insistence on the body over the mind renders it flat as a tawdry love story; as epistemological inquiry (created through its repeated images of an indeterminate reality), next to the original challenges of a Pynchon or a Nabokov, the novel displays the hackneyed commercialism of a television movie.

Modernist innovations be-

come fashionably acceptable banalities in Wier and epitomize why Cleanth Brooks calls ours a literary "Age of Silver." When technique triumphs over content, rather than deriving from it, literature becomes exploitive and decadent. The competent literary technicians at work today do not create art, something that finally endures because it brings with it a sense of intellectual energy that comes

with the discovery of new ideas, not merely the reliance on a derivative and earthy poetics of shock to get reader attention. Art of a silver age begins just as respect for its audience ends. The result is art—no, craft—for its own sake. By contrast, perhaps art of a golden age issues from a concern with higher human values and produces a literature that can touch as well as dazzle. □

Reader Abuse

Helen Hazen: *Endless Rapture: Rape, Romance, and the Female Imagination*;

Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

If Mrs. Hazen wrote *Endless Rapture* with her tongue planted in her cheek, then her cheek must be ample enough to admit a fully loaded freight train. If she is being serious, then the vacant roundhouse metaphor can be applied to her brain pan. Mrs. Hazen, a woman who has apparently read virtually every modern romance novel available, is an educated but not intelligent Emma Bovary, or perhaps is what Mme. Bovary would have mutated into as a result of some toxic chemicals getting mixed into the Rouen cattle feed. Mrs. Hazen announces: "I would like to be raped," then qualifies it by continuing, "but I want it to happen to me exactly as it happened to Cressida in *Vice Avenged*." What that means is that she doesn't want some nauseating slug to leap at her from the backseat of her car in the parking lot of a shopping mall, but that a "marquis" do it in a "hollow" on a "bed of bearskin rugs and furs he has spread." "Rape," Mrs. Hazen contends, "occurs in the woman's world of illusion; it is a ritual of love that exists in fantasy." We wonder how much time she has

spent in hospital emergency rooms, courtrooms, or bedrooms where criminally abused women suffer in silence. She seems to argue that men vent their urges by reading books about cowboys and that women's fantasies take them into stylized worlds where there are the marquis, hollows, and bearskin rugs. Isn't there more than a slight difference between roping calves and being raped?

Mrs. Hazen assures the reader that she is essentially a down-to-earth kind of gal:

I was raised by two homesteading parents in the Alaskan woods. We—my mother, sisters, father, and I—pulled stumps every year. We cut down trees and dragged them from the woods to our home. We shot moose and packed in the carcasses. We built cabins. My father called us 'you guys.'

Solid credentials, those. Mrs. Hazen launches into a polemic with feminists, whom she claims have it all wrong when they talk about rape as something bad, and even drags Edmund Burke in by his periwig in order to bolster her position. Mrs. Hazen fails to realize that fantasies—innocent or otherwise—too often become manifest in the real world. One real marquis, a contemporary of Burke, was, fortunately for the public, locked up in the

Bastille, in part because he failed to recognize that private whims and public acts are two distinct things. Mrs. Hazen equates the reading of books wherein women are raped with a desire for the same; do readers of *The Little Engine That Could* hope to become trains? Less time in the Alaskan woods and more time in New York City would have undoubtedly caused some scales to fall from her eyes. □

Suspicious Silence

Richard J. Barnet: *The Alliance: America, Europe, Japan, Makers of the Post-war World*; Simon & Schuster, New York.

As comic devices, silence, pause, or omission can sometimes be superior to the wittiest bon mot. Thus, for example, when Swift scattered strategic hiatuses throughout his *Tale of a Tub* and his *Battle of the Books*, what was not there was as satirically biting as what was. Richard Barnet is also a master of carefully deployed muteness, though the effect he aims at is neither satire nor amusement. As an intelligent and articulate writer who codirects the Institute for Policy Studies, Mr. Barnet cannot say enough about the sins—real and imagined—of American leaders and multinational corporations in their dealings with Western and Asian allies. However, whenever confronted by evidence of the relentless communist aggression that makes a strong alliance of free nations essential, he grows strangely quiet. Thus, while the faults and follies of the CIA are endlessly dissected, the KGB's espionage, disinformation, "wet affairs," and global support for terrorism are passed over in profoundest

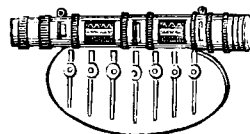
silence. Similarly, though the Anglo-French seizure of the Suez Canal is analyzed minutely as an example of how America's muddled foreign policy produces international treachery, the Soviets' gross violation of the Yalta Accord in Greece and Eastern Europe, the building of the Berlin Wall, the invasions of South Korea, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan, and the imposition of martial law in Poland all receive such passing and deferential attention that they appear to hold little significance for the West or Japan. Convinced that Americans have caused needless discord because they are "too suspicious of Soviet intentions," Mr. Barnet protects his fragile thesis within sound-proof margins, impervious to the moans of Vietnamese slave laborers toiling on Siberian pipelines, to the death cries of Afghan villagers slaughtered by Russian bombers, and to the screams of dissidents being ruthlessly "rehabilitated" in Kamchatka or in the psychiatric wards. No doubt Mr. Barnet eschews cacophony and sincerely longs for the blissful silence of worldwide peace. But if the Soviets ever achieve their objective of imposing a far deeper silence on the West than this soft-spoken pundit can even imagine, they will surely reward his helpfulness by ***** *Hiatus in MS.* ***** □

Jejune Jihad

David Spurr: *Conflicts in Consciousness: T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Criticism*; University of Illinois Press; Urbana.

When the Moors wanted something belonging to medieval Christians—such as southern Spain—they simply took it by force of arms. Modern infidels, like David Spurr, are more subtle. Having decided that T. S. Eliot's

imagination is a good thing, too good to belong to a Christian, Dr. Spurr makes *his* conquest by partitioning Eliot into a sterile religious intellect and a living creative vision and declaring the two to be irreconcilably at war, with the best poetry coming from the undefeated and therefore unreligious forces of Eliot's mind. Such a reading of Eliot's verse thus permits neoheathens to enjoy the beauty of Eliot's verse without ever confronting its doctrinal content; indeed, it allows the unbelieving auditor to feel an aesthetic superiority precisely *because* he does not share the poet's dogmatic convictions. For many moderns, inhabiting an agnostic critical position which looks far down upon Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism is even more satisfying than ruling a sheikdom in Granada with a view of the Mediterranean.



nean. Of course, in order to convert key segments of Eliot's verse into irreligious pleasure gardens, Dr. Spurr is forced to depart from the mainstream of critical opinion and to look "below the surface of Eliot's language" into an allegedly repressed inner psyche. The fatuity of this approach is particularly evident in the interpretation of Eliot's repeated images of "descent into a subaqueous world of confluences" as symbolic of a retreat into a potentially Romantic subconscious which is fighting to survive the deadly oppression of conscious adherence to Christianity. But anyone familiar with the New Testament instantly recognizes submersion in water (i.e., baptism) as a central Christian symbol for death, burial, and renewed life. Professor Spurr's perversely wrongheaded reading of great

Christian poetry suggests that some English department needs a visit from El Cid. (BC) □

Soothing the Savages

Ellen Frankfort: *Kathy Boudin and the Dance of Death*; Stein & Day, New York.

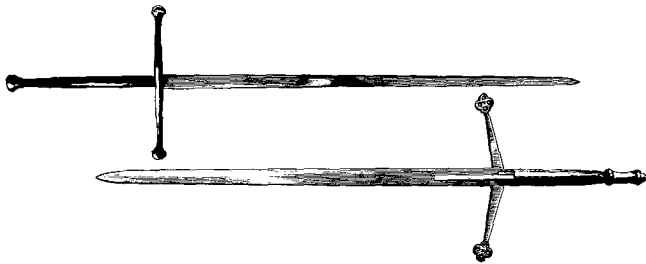
Terrorists are not people who hold screenings of John Carpenter's movies, nor do they promote the reading of Stephen King books. That they aren't and don't would *seem* to be obvious, yet many Americans remain oblivious to the fact that terrorists are people who use violence and who act in an insane manner in order to justify whatever it is that happens to be itching them at the moment. The American attitude is: "Terrorists operate Over There," by which they mean Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and Anywhere Else. However, as a number of recently released government reports indicate, this country's blithe neglect of terrorists is making it a land ripe for attack—yes, *attack*: guns, bombs, missiles, etc.

Some Americans, particularly those who reached puberty in the heady days of the 60's and who have yet to emerge from that pimply state, are aware of terrorists, yet they treat the criminals as if they are Cabbage Patch Kids. This is Ellen Frankfort's approach in her dimwitted apologia for a despicable creature. What's more annoying—and disgusting—than Frankfort's semiliterate mollycoddling is the fact that Stein & Day saw fit to publish it. Is this an example of editorial "open thinking" or of olfactory prowess that insures a publisher able to smell money even in the rubbish of the bygone political issues. □

Editorial Comment

(continued from page 5)

Secretary, Mr. Anthony Eden, had planted the idea of giving away the Eastern Polish territory in Roosevelt's head as early as March 1943. One may guess that Churchill's disappointment was in the fact that Roosevelt gave away freely and without bargaining. But Mr. Roosevelt gave away in order to appear amenable. He did so at the time the German army was hundreds of miles inside the Soviet Union, and if someone was desperate and dependent, it was the Soviet Union. Roosevelt made his arrangement without consulting with the Polish



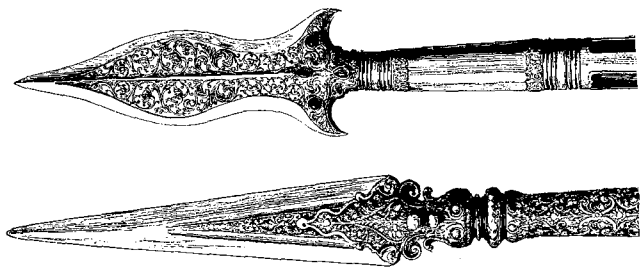
Government in London, the faithful ally whose soldiers were giving their lives fighting under the Allied command from Africa to Norway, and whose 700,000 (350,000 front line plus 350,000 supporting services) soldiers of the Polish Underground Movement (A.K.) were effectively tying over one million German soldiers in occupied Poland. Not only did he not consult the Poles, he lied to them by suppressing his deal with Stalin. In fact, Roosevelt was lying to the American people. In his Message to Congress on January 11, 1944, in regard to Teheran he stated that "no secret treaties or political or financial commitments" were made. In the same spirit he wrote to a Congressman of Polish origin, Joseph Mruk (R-New York), "no secret commitments were made by me at Teheran." His lies continued. On June 7, 1944, Roosevelt said to Polish Prime Minister Mikolajczyk, "I will see to it that Poland does not come out of the war injured," but he failed to mention that he had already given away 70,049 square miles of Polish territory to Stalin at Teheran. Mr. Mikolajczyk is on record saying that "the deal" at Teheran surfaced in confrontation between him, Stalin, Churchill, and Harriman in Moscow on October 13, 1944.

The Polish territory was not the only pawn given away at Roosevelt's convenience; so was the Polish government. Roosevelt's opening statement at Yalta at the fourth plenary meeting of February 7, 1944, specifically addressed to Stalin and Churchill was: "I am not concerned with frontiers. I am likewise not so concerned on the question of the continuity of the (Polish) government. There has not really been any Polish government since 1939 ... I discard the idea of continuity [of

the Polish Government-in-Exile]." He discarded that Government which had led its people since 1939 for 2078 days in fighting against Germany. No other country in World War II fought so long against nazis. Each day cost the Poles 3000 human lives. As Stanislaw Mikolajczyk wrote in *The Rape of Poland* (McGraw-Hill; New York; 1948), 800,000 Poles were killed in battle; thousands more died in concentration camps, prisons, and street executions.

Mr. Harriman, who demonstrated some distress of conscience, suggested in January 1944 that Poles be told about Roosevelt's deal with Stalin. The President and then-Secretary of State Cordell Hull vetoed this suggestion.

Just as the President chose not to disclose information about Teheran to the United States Congress, he also covered up his dealing at Yalta. At Yalta an agreement was signed that was not included in the formal text. It contained two secret accords: one gave the Soviets the Kuril Islands, previously a Japanese territory (among other Far East concessions); the second part promised the forcible return of Soviet citizens from Allied zones to the Soviet Union. It was Mr. Eden who promoted the latter idea and steered it through the British Cabinet. The results of it were shameful; as Sulzberger writes in *Such a Peace*: "in Odessa the Soviet citizens were being taken off the ship upon arrival, and shot in batches behind the buildings." It was tragic to witness American soldiers armed with cudgels herding Soviet citizens in West Germany into cattle trains to be taken to the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, on March 1, 1945, in a report to Congress on his trip to Yalta, Roosevelt did not mention the Agreement for the forcible return of Soviet



citizens. Moreover, he specifically denied that he had discussed the Far East (Kuril Islands) at Yalta.

Other United States Presidents did not condone the Yalta Agreement. President Truman, who was normally well disposed toward the Soviets, within 48 hours of taking office, proposed to Churchill to send a telegram to Stalin protesting the breaking of Yalta commitments in regard to Poland. Also, President Eisenhower submitted a Resolution on February 20, 1953, rejecting the Teheran and Yalta Agreements in unequivocal language:

that the United States rejects any interpretation or applications of any international agreements or understandings, made

during the course of World War II, which have been perverted to bring about the subjugation of free peoples and further join in proclaiming the hope that the peoples, who have been subjected to the captivity of Soviet despotism shall again enjoy the right of self-determination within a framework which will sustain the peace; that they shall again have the right to choose the form of government under which they will live; and that sovereign rights of self-government shall be restored to them all in accordance with the pledge of the Atlantic Charter.

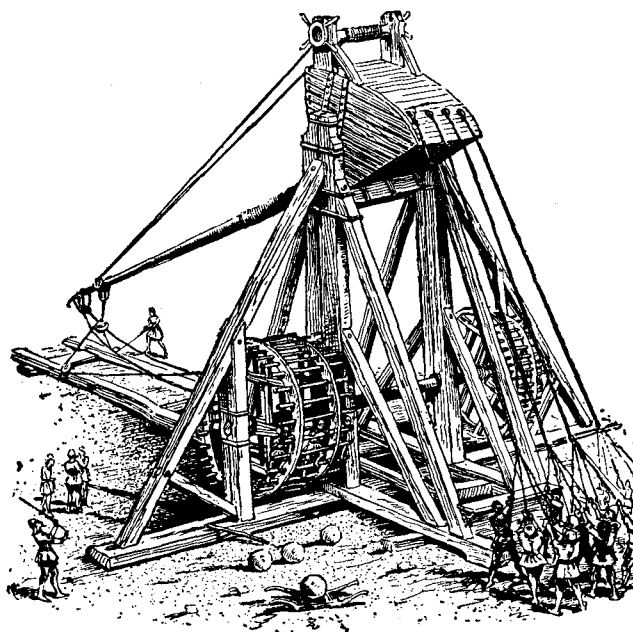
Unfortunately, Congress did not pass the Resolution.

From the perspective of time, it is obvious that "the malice of the wicked was reinforced by the weakness of the virtuous." Yet, the question remains: Should the President lie by omission or otherwise in the interest of his own country? In 1941, a Pole in Warsaw was arrested in a street dragnet by German police. He was sent to a concentration camp where he was murdered. His crime—he carried Mr. Roosevelt's picture in his billfold. Nothing can be done for him now, but what about the rest of the Poles? Do they have to carry the yoke of Teheran and Yalta forever?

Listed in a current publication by the United States Department of State, *Treaties in Force: a List of Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States in Force on January 1, 1983*, are two contradictory documents. One is "Atlantic Charter." The other is "Protocol of the proceedings of the Crimea Conference. Signed at Yalta February 1, 1945; entered into force for the United States February 11, 1945. States which are parties: Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom and the United States." How can these two documents possibly coexist "in force"? Roosevelt's apologists use the argument that Yalta was "a good deal," but they tiptoe over Teheran. They minimize Roosevelt's role in relation to Poland's and East Europe's fate because Roosevelt "meant well," and they blame the Soviet Government for not keeping promises. These arguments defy logic. Neither Roosevelt nor Churchill had any right to grant the Soviet Union 40 percent of the Polish territory and to change her frontiers, nor to change the Polish Government, nor to impose Soviet tutelage over the Polish election. They dealt directly with Stalin on all four issues. In making these decisions they bypassed the legal Polish Government-in-Exile. This was betrayal of an ally, and the heart of the problem.

True, some ameliorating factors should be recognized, painful as they might be to the Poles. When British Field Marshal Alexander asserted at Yalta that the purpose of fighting this war was to secure "liberty and decent existence for the people of Europe," Prime Minister Churchill blurted out, "Not a bit of it. We are fighting to secure the proper respect for the British people." This may be called a policy priority, but both morally and historically it proved to be a posture of doleful myopia. As far as Roosevelt's priorities were concerned, these

were perhaps best assessed and ranked in Dr. Blaine David Benedict's dissertation *Roosevelt and Poland*: 1) "To win the War with Stalin's cooperation"; 2) "To establish the United Nations with the Soviet Union's participation"; 3) "To formulate written principles of post-war international cooperation with assent of the Soviet Government"; 4) "To win the Presidential Election of 1944." It should also be recognized that even if from the Soviet Government's point of view, Poland



was relevant to Soviet security, Stalin's notion of "security" meant dominance and control. To assume that Churchill and Roosevelt thought that by "Soviet security" Stalin meant anything less than dominance and control was even at their historical moment politically naive, if not wholly inept.

As someone observed, Roosevelt and Churchill sold a neighbor's house to a ruthless partner, without the neighbor's knowledge. Then, common sense dictates that *they* were responsible for whatever action the ruthless partner undertook afterwards in the neighbor's house. To blame *him* is a childish excuse—*they* stole the house in the first place. The best postscript to the history of our century's most egregious blunder in the realm of political morality will be the simple fact that one of the Solidarity members arrested in Poland noticed "Made in the U.S.A." on his handcuffs.

—J. K. Zawodny

Dr. Zawodny is a Professor Emeritus of the Claremont Graduate School and Pomona College. He was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, Harvard Center for International Affairs, and the Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford.

Slime After Slime

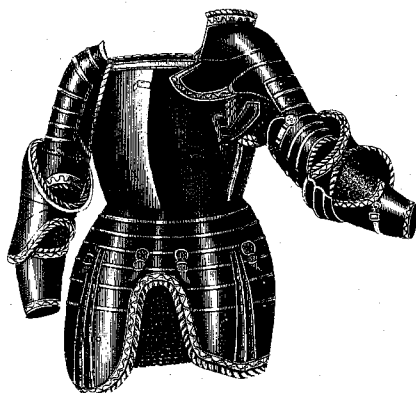
Star 80; Written and Directed by Bob Fosse; Ladd Company/Warner Brothers.

by Stephen Macaulay

An ad for *Star 80* claims that it is considered "One of the Year's [1983] Ten Best" by a number of people who should know; lest anyone have doubts, the claimants are listed. One man, apparently, just couldn't say it enough; Gene Siskel appears in second place, behind the modern oracle, *Time* magazine, for his *At the Movies* TV show (film reviews for people who don't like to read), and in third place for his column in the *Chicago Tribune* (ditto—and Rupert Murdoch owns the other Chicago paper). From New York (WABC-TV) to Toronto (the *Sun* and the *Globe & Mail*) to San Diego (*Tribune*), cinematic sleaze is hailed as being noteworthy. The reviewers undoubtedly spend their off hours kicking over rotting logs in the woods in order to see what lurks beneath and writing paeans to sewage treatment plants.

Star 80 is a rendering of a true story, one about a teenage girl from Vancouver, British Columbia, who was "discovered" by a greasy pimp-like character while she was pumping ice cream cones in a Dairy Queen. Perhaps the man, who spent much of his time in the dark while surrounded by pictures of "stars," evoked a feeling of kindredness within the movie reviewers, which accounts for their praise of the project. The female is presented as being as pure as driven ice milk throughout the cretinous saga, notwithstanding the fact that early on, after but a few dates, momma's little girl (36-24-36) poses for Polaroids in the bedroom of the swain with the filthy mustache. The goal of the cheesy two-bit operator is a lofty one—at least from an insect's point of view: to get her snapshots into the pages of *Playboy*. It happens. She happens. He doesn't happen. He doesn't like that. Being, as he

is, mentally unstable, he *really doesn't like it*. ("But I've grown," she tells him, while phoning from the suite of her new boyfriend, a movie director who is going to "make her a star"—sounds familiar.) Eventually, the spurned mental midget takes a shotgun to the skull of the former Playmate of the Year. Since that can only happen once, at the end of the story, Bob Fosse decided that he'd take advantage of the bloody mess and drag it throughout the entire movie by cutting in teasing segments, sort of like a stripper dropping a glove here, a shoe there. Perhaps realizing that he might be considered too much of a "downer," Fosse overcompensated by showing still photos of the Playmate's anatomy over and over and over again. (I wonder: which did Siskel find to be the most notable?) Of course, once the film draws to a close, the whole savage act is shown with all of the attendant gore. Moreover, the death of the girl/woman is topped by the creep taking said shotgun to his own forehead for the grand finale. Lest anyone miss anything, an overhead shot of the remains provide the whole layout. If this constitutes "One of the Year's Ten Best," then the reviewers in question must be excited beyond belief when they visit their local butcher.



The slick, sick operator is shown as being the villain. The female object is simply a naïf. The hero—hold on—is none other than Hugh Hefner—"Hef" to his pals, "Mr. Hefner" to young women

with large busts. The hero tries to counsel the naïf away from the operator and into what he calls the bosom of "the *Playboy* family." Had she only but listened... is the message of *Star 80*.

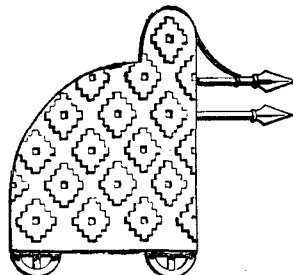
Playboy, of course, exists only to pander to the hormones of men who require no further excitation. It and like magazines spout bosh about "freedom." There's strong evidence that points to the stark fact that as long as these magazines exist, some disgusting acts of violence will be engendered by their very existence. It would be an act of ignorance to maintain that rags like *Playboy* will disappear and be replaced by more "wholesome" gazing material. Not even a nuclear war would bleach the stains away. However, if there was less public attention to matters concerning the sex organs of both females and males, if what was once considered a "private" matter could be treated as such, chances are there would be fewer murders, rapes, cases of venereal disease, etc. The odds of that happening, I'm afraid, aren't worth betting on. Consider *Star 80*: it was an actual event, the subject of the story in the *Village Voice* (which served as the basis of the film), a TV movie, the grist for an "important" director's mill. And, of course, "One of the Year's Ten Best." □

Sense & Sensibility

Broadway Danny Rose; Written and Directed by Woody Allen; Orion Pictures.

The last time we saw Allen (*Zelig; Chronicles of Culture*, January 1984, p. 40), we suspected that he was on his way to finally, firmly establishing himself on the cultural landscape as a comedian in the more ancient sense (as opposed to the sitcom sense), that is, as a writer/director/actor who, through the use of common characters, makes amusing but telling statements about the status quo. Overtly, it doesn't come to pass in

Broadway Danny Rose, the story of a hapless, Woody Allenesque theatrical manager who, because of who he is, has acts like a blind xylophone player and a ventriloquist with a stutter. Had the protagonists in *Take the Money and Run* or *Play It Again, Sam* or any of the others gone into that line of work, their properties would be akin. This isn't progress. But it isn't regression, either. It is simply another chapter in the Allen



oeuvre. However, when Allen's new contribution is compared to the various and sundry vulgarities that are oozing on the screens at a theater near you (and sometimes *off* of the screens, via 3-D glasses), his simple love story, flimsy though it may be, shows how rapidly we are descending into sociocultural morass. Yet it holds out hope. Maybe next time. (SM) □

Sinking

***Splash*; Directed by Ron Howard; Screenplay by Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel, and Bruce Jay Friedman; Touchstone Films.**

Once, Julie Andrews was Mary Poppins for Walt Disney Studios. Later, she updated her vocabulary with expletives and bared vast portions of her anatomy for the cameras of others. Sex over chastity. Once, Don Knotts starred in a movie for kids called *The Incredible Mr. Limpet* in which he, through animation, played a dolphin that aids the U.S. Navy. Later, he took the role of a man concerned only with his glands on TV's *Three's Company*. Sex over fantasy.

Once, Disney made movies like *Fantasia*. Once, young Ron Howard worked with a likeable Don Knotts on a civilized TV show. Later, Disney created Touchstone Films; Howard, older, directed a movie (for another company) about love in a morgue. Touchstone hired Howard to direct a non-G rated movie, *Splash*. Sex into Disney. Who says that things are not progressing and improving?

Splash is noticeable only inasmuch as it is the first non-Disney Disney movie. I suppose that its proponents would say that the film is more "authentic" or "realistic" than the chaste Disney fare, but I can't imagine what can be construed as "true" or "real" about a New Yorker's sexual escapades with a female semifish. What is presumably "adult" is actually quite childish. If any extended amount of time is spent thinking about *Splash*, then the whole project takes on a characteristic of aged seafood. (SM) □

Swan Song

***The Dresser*; Directed by Peter Yates; Screenplay by Ronald Harwood; Columbia Pictures.**

While it is banal to say that the human condition has never been more acutely yet universally limned through the medium of the English language by anyone better than William Shakespeare, it is true and, given the bulk of the texts produced today, worth repeating. A passage from his *Macbeth* hovers around *The Dresser*, which has been convincingly transformed from the Broadway boards to film reels by Peter Yates:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more.

All of us, no matter who we are or what we do, are a part of the grand perfor-

mance; we, for our time, play a role, and are then hidden away in our shrouds, are eclipsed by the curtain. Of course, the theater is no more than a metaphor for virtually everyone except a few, such as those who devote their lives to the speaking, feeling, and perhaps even *being* the Bard's lines.

The Dresser is a scene from such a life, the final scene of the last act of a player known simply as "Sir," a man who was recognized at some point during the first half of this century by his kingdom for making a contribution to its culture by devoting his life to trodding the stage as Lear, Othello, and the rest. A noble undertaking. But what happens to such a man when the climactic moment comes to be, when a physical debilitation—perhaps a stroke—takes hold of the body while the mind and soul are infused with Bardic images? What, more to the point of the film's title, are the lives like of the minor characters, the low ones, the fools, the little names listed in the dramatis personae; what happens, what do they sense, when the booking has run its course? The quotidian requirements and the physical and metaphysical environments of the actor and his dresser are certainly different than those of the rest of us paltry players, but the poignancy they experience is something that we all partake of during *our* runs. (SM) □

Daydreams & Reflections

***Fanny and Alexander*; Written and Directed by Ingmar Bergman; Embassy Pictures.**

The spirits of three authors, two passed and one quick, hover over and glide through *Fanny and Alexander*. Most substantially, or materially, there's Balzac, whose bounteous physicality provides the texture of the Ekdahl family's life; they could slip beyond the

margins and into *Comédie humaine* with ease. If the outward aspects come from that source, then the lower and superior layers of life, or existence in a more metaphysical sense, may be traced to Isaac Bashevis Singer, the man who was trained in mysteries at the Tachkemoni Rabbinical Seminary, but who wove the threads of a more public—yet no less secret—material in his stories. Finally, there is the writer who looms over all writers in our day and even in the days that passed before his: Shakespeare. It's not the obvious scripter of *Hamlet*, but the encoder of the more wondrous *The Tempest*—though not the fairy tale, but the words and tropes and images of a life in the theater coming to a close. To

be sure, the grandeur of bourgeois civilization, which Bergman *seems* to defend (a puzzlement engendered by his coyness), is tempered in *Fanny and Alexander*, shown as it is during its most nonconformist era: the twilight days of bohemian sophistication. Consequently, Bergman's metaphysics are endowed with an expressionism based on the bizarre which, through its dislocations, dulls the edge of the conflict then existing between the ossifying and receding Swedish Protestantism and the aborning attitudes and perceptions of the modern artist. *Fanny and Alexander* is, its creator said, to be his last film. As a capstone on an obelisk that was some 40 years in the making, it is fitting. (SM) □

MUSIC

Tumbling Down Memory Lane

Herb Hendler: *Year by Year in the Rock Era: Events and Conditions Shaping the Rock Generations That Reshaped America*; Greenwood Press; Westport, CT.

Late in February NBC broadcast a night to forget. First up was something designated *TV's Bloopers & Practical Jokes*, which was based on a strategy similar to that of a self-referential statement. That is, it was an idiotic show that displayed the idiocy of other programs that have aired. Next there was what was advertised as a "spectacular two-hour event," *Super Night of Rock 'n' Roll*. That program probably did more to boost the sales of all types of music other than rock and roll than any other event, spectacular or not. The show was meant to be an orgy of self-praise for the so-called rock generation. It turned out to be an utter embarrassment for all those on either side of the TV screen. Moreover, if the dead can figuratively roll in their graves, then a large number of boppers, many of whom were shown on

black-and-white clips, were rocking around the crypt. The host was a man who is pushing 50 in a graceless manner; he was dressed in costumes that were supposed to be appropriate for the particular periods in question (e.g., slicked hair and iridescent pants for the 50's; long hair and beads for the 60's), but which merely pointed out the paunchy absurdity of the host and, by extension, the ridiculous nature of the whole concept. While severely abbreviated film clips made up the bulk of the show, there were some performances by relics including Chuck Berry, The Four Seasons, The Hollies, The Jefferson (née Airplane) Starship, and other resuscitated victims. By and large, these undead performances were worse than the clips; high voices cracked and clinkers punctuated chords. But everyone *seemed* to be happy, which, perhaps, can be explained by the fact that NBC undoubtedly paid dearly for the smiles and the dancing girls in the front row.

The two television shows are not unlike *Year by Year in the Rock Era*.

Notables

Chutzpah

Mr. Calvin Trillin eats well. That's a sure thing. He also doesn't have trouble finding work. *The New Yorker* and *The Nation* both publish his essays, a fair number of which are almost amusing. Then Ticknor & Fields of New York puts some of the essays between stiff covers. Well-fed, moderately well-off, and, well, semi-humorous, chances are. Mr. Trillin won't kill anyone. But he is interested in those who do shoot, maim, or bolo people to death. If he weren't Mr. Trillin, someone might characterize him as an "ambulance chaser," but oh, no, that wouldn't do at all. Not only does Mr. Trillin have a . . . morbid streak, so too did his editors at *The New Yorker*, wherein the pieces in *Killings* first appeared.

Mr. Trillin is, in a word, smug. He had an assignment for *The New Yorker* that began in 1967 and ended 15 years later. He says that he could do whatever he wanted to. Like a child whose "daddy is better than *your* daddy," Mr. Trillin whines, "a magazine like *The New Yorker* does not have the record-keeping function that a newspaper has . . . it can—and did in some of these pieces—record the death of a single unimportant person without feeling the need to justify its interest the way a newspaper might." In other words, *The New Yorker* (and its writers) can do whatever it damn well pleases, and you'd better not forget it. Moreover, if you should dare to take exception with its publishing stories about the killings of single or multiple persons, then it's only because you're a rube who doesn't understand the insignificant importance of such things. □

That is, *TV's Bloopers & Practical Jokes* consists of footage that belongs in either a wastebasket or a curio shop; *Super Night of Rock 'n' Roll* shows that an extremely small fraction of the pop music produced during the last 30 years will survive the next 30, and most of that only as the result of commercialized revivals. *Year by Year* is simply a compen-

dium of trivia, lists of items that may be of marginal interest to cultural historians of the near past but which should not be used to fill up the empty spaces in many of the skulls that have been created since 1954. (SM) □

Performances

Antonio Vivaldi: *Concerto for Two Violins*; **Asten Magna Ensemble;** Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch Records.

Vivaldi for aficionados, dependably assuaging, in a bit colorless, but correct, performance.

Janáček: *Concertino*; **Prokofiev:** *Overture on Hebrew Themes*; **Berwald;** *Septet*; **The Amsterdam Nonet;** Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch Records.

Janáček and Prokofiev represent the same period of transforming music into the grand modernist compromise between lyricism and intellect, imagination and knowledge. Somehow Pro-

kofiev was one of the very few who saved the intangible and the magic. Berwald hailed from Sweden of the early 19th century and idolized Beethoven. The Amsterdam ensemble renders justice to both epochs.

Samuel Barber: *Summer Music*; **Elliot Carter:** *Woodwind Quintet*; **Irving Fine:** *Partite*; **Joseph Goodman:** *Scherzo for Wind Quintet*; **Souli Ventorum Wind Quintet;** Musical Heritage Society, Inc.; Tinton Falls, NJ.

Barber unexciting, but sweet; the rest—respectable but unexciting.

The Western Film World of Dimitri Tiomkin; London Studio Symphony Orchestra & The John McCarthy Singers; Musical Heritage Society, Inc.; Trinton Falls, NJ.

Hollywood sinfonics of Anglo-Saxon musical roots by a composer with a Ukrainian family name. It's frightening how little it means and matters without the appropriate moving pictures. □

Rapids, where he was to live and work. Like other domestic painters and writers, he traveled to Paris. Consequently, he was, for a mercifully brief time, a belated impressionist; his works from that period have all of the possibility and grandeur of paint-by-number canvases. Then, apparently, Wood decided to paint what he knew, not what he pretended to. He became a regionalist.

Regionalism, by and large, had its day in the years following the Depression, a period that witnessed a concomitant rise in social realism. On the one hand, thanks, in many cases, to Federal programs, there were painters who turned to the land, while their peers in the cities rendered scenes for the edification of the urban proletariat. The latter took their fashion from Moscow. But as the 1930's turned into the 40's, a number of painters in New York felt that they had to become "world-class" painters. Naturally, the socialist realism program promulgated by the Popular Front had to go since propaganda is for illustrators, not artists and the Hitler-Stalin pact caused a few scales to be sluffed off of corneas. However, together with flimsy illusions, these New York artists also tossed regionalism into the trashcan. There are a number of reasons why they did so. One is that no one in Paris had done much with nature since Douanier Rousseau. Another, perhaps, is that few of the loft inhabitants were able to distinguish a cow from a horse.

A fairly typical New York organization called the American Modern Artists held a show in the city in 1943; the introduction to its catalog reads, in part,

This exhibition is a first step to free the artist from the stifling control of an outmoded politics. For art in America is still the plaything of politicians. Isolationist art still dominates the American scene. Regionalism still holds the reigns of America's artistic future. It is high time we cleared the cultural atmosphere of America . . . We who dedicated our lives to art—to modern art in America, at a time when men found easy success crying "to hell

ART

From the Heartland — & the Heart

by Gary S. Vasilash

Look long and hard at the "official" list of 20th-century American painters: Jackson Pollock . . . Arshile Gorky . . . Robert Rauschenberg . . . Willem de Kooning . . . Jasper Johns . . . Robert Motherwell . . . Mark Rothko . . . Almost nowhere, outside of Iowa, will the name Grant Wood be found. A recent show at The Art Institute of Chicago, "Grant Wood: The Regionalist Vision," indicates why Wood is ignored, yet it also pro-

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vokes a lingering doubt about the sense of putting Wood in a subcategory along with, say, Norman Rockwell. Wood was often much more—and never less—than an illustrator; he is always more indigenously truthful and genuine than the before-listed artists.

It's said that "You can't keep the boy on the farm once he's seen the big city," yet Wood's career belies that maxim. A product of Anamosa, Iowa (born in 1891, the year that saw Gauguin getting back to nature and Toulouse-Lautrec finding his nature through the music hall posters), Wood spent his first 10 years on the family farm, then moved to Cedar

with art, let's have pictures of the old oaken bucket"—we mean to make manifest by our work, in our studios and in our galleries the requirement for a culture in a new America.

Culture, as defined by these artists, then, had something to do with canvases displaying geometric figures, blobs, streaks, aureoles, etc. Such things smacked of intellect and sophistication. "Old oaken buckets" were for the rubes. These American Modern Artists were obviously worked up—and with good reason. During the better part of the first half of this century, modern art was European art. Impressionists, cubists, surrealists, and the rest were those who lived in and around what was then the center of Western civilization. They developed their abilities and sensibilities while surrounded by tradition. Monet, Braque, Picasso, Klee, Miro, Kandinsky, and their kin didn't say "to hell with tradition, let's have strange arrangements that are just new," but reacted to the art that had existed through the ages. Reaction requires interface; rejection needs only the briefest introduction. Part of the reason why the American modernists didn't make it (and why they became so upset) was that they were merely playing at art, mimicking those who knew, understood, felt, and internalized art. Had these Americans not rejected the regionalist tradition, one that had its roots in 17th-century America, there would have been great possibilities for a true American style. But reject they did, and so-called "contemporary art" is the result.

Admittedly, much regionist art is, in a word, bad. For example, Wood's pair *Farmer with Pigs* and *Farmer's Wife with Chicken* (both 1932) resembles something that belongs in the produce section of a grocery store. But his oil *Spring Turning* (1936), with its undulating but ordered sequence of green and brown rectangles representing more than an imaginary homage to Demeter, is more fecund, provocative, and, yes, appealing, than anything the

American pseudo-Europeans created during their puny aspirations to cubism or the rendering of myth. *Victorian Survival* (1931), an oil on composition board that resembles a tintype and which shows a prim, parched matron next to a goosenecked telephone, has something of a genuine but tangential relationship to the juxtapositions of Magritte—and the tangent is closer than Rauschenberg has ever come. Still, there are the petty lithographs like *Midnight Alarm* and *Shrine Quartet* (both 1939) that have a juvenile bucolicism or boosterism about them and which offset the genuine nature of other lithographs of the same year, such as *Fertility*. Perhaps Wood's vision, like that of the cataracted

spinster in his satirical *Daughters of Revolution* (1932), was clouded by his spending too much time down on the farm.

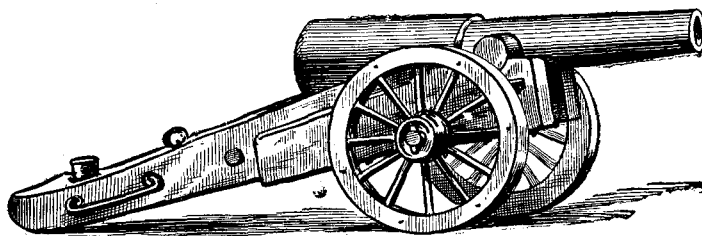
However, Grant Wood is undoubtedly one of the true artists of the American landscape and psyche. It was once not merely "okay" but *proper* to have a sincere belief in things like family and the land, in cooperation and struggle, in religion and the state. "Naive!" thunder those who barricade themselves in penthouses that rise above fetid and rotting cities. Perhaps. But unquestionably more sincere, fruitful, and edifying than the cryptic pastiches of horror and despair that are passed off on the market as art. □

THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

Red Rainbow

What's astonishing (or, perhaps, moderately surprising, if we remain aware of what life in liberal America has taught us over the last two decades) is the media's color blindness when it comes to making an ideological evaluation of the Rev. Jesse Jackson's program-

dismantling the American economic system by means of Federally sponsored distributive pressures and practices. He calls for social egalitarianism that will be gained not through democratic traditions, but through quasitotalitarian prerogatives vested in the government and the bureaucracy. He declares an imperative to appease those interna-



matic rhetoric. At a closer look, this agenda followed by the press-at-large seems oddly identical with all that emerges as theory and doctrine from the Institute of Policy Studies (an idea and research center which cloaks the old Marxian orthodoxy and the defense of the Soviet march into the future with modern, pseudopragmatic, independently radical phraseology). Rev. Jackson unabashedly proclaims the necessity of

tional forces which we can rationally and legitimately call hostile to America, and to accept their terms, their postulates, and their global actions against us. If this is not pure and simply the political agenda of the domestic and foreign radical left, we do not know what is. But don't hold your breath waiting for CBS, *The New York Times*, Harvard's faculty, or the *Chicago Tribune's* editorialists to call it by its proper name. □

JOURNALISM

Neo-Camelot

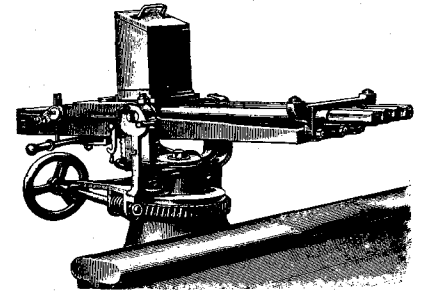
For years supermarket tabloids have shamelessly made merchandise out of John F. Kennedy by promulgating almost every imaginable shred of gossip or speculation about his life and its untimely end. During the recent revival of Kennedy nostalgia occasioned by the 20th anniversary of his assassination, however, antiestablishment journals claiming intellectual respectability have introduced a new twist to the Kennedy-for-profit mythologizing by trying to reshape JFK into a visionary friend of all "progressive forces." Typical of this attempt to resurrect this dead American patriot as an anti-American fabrication

was an article in *Mother Jones* written by one Adam Hochschild, an *MJ* editor. Kennedy, Mr. Hochschild ruefully conceded, had said some terribly reactionary things during his life, including this statement made in 1960, just three years before his death:

The enemy is the Communist system itself—implacable, insatiable, unceasing in its drive for world domination. For this is not a struggle for the supremacy of arms alone—it is also a struggle for supremacy between two conflicting ideologies: Freedom under God versus ruthless, godless tyranny.

How did *MJ*'s erudite journalism inter-

pret this kind of pronouncement? Simple: "John F. Kennedy was a man whose intelligence ranged far ahead of his beliefs." Exactly when JFK underwent the surgical lobotomy that separated his

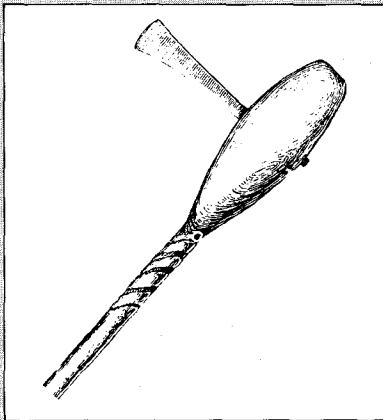


convictions from his cerebrations *MJ*'s learned editor did not disclose. Perhaps they plan to reveal the sordid details—time, place, attending physician—of that secret operation in some future special edition, published jointly with the *National Enquirer*. □

Notables

On Seriousness

"Serious women have a difficult time with clothes . . . because feminine clothes are not designed to project a serious demeanor." That about sums Susan Brownmiller's *Femininity* (Linden Press/



Simon & Schuster; New York) up. The author, with some stabs at equanimity, understanding, and even forbearance, notwithstanding, at the bottom of her

heart, deems those women who project their demeanor through clothes (scents, hygiene, cosmetics, cultivation of sex appeal, shaved armpits, etc.) unserious. To us, however, Moll Flanders, Nana, and Camille—not to mention Aspasia and Coco Chanel—seemed very, very serious, certainly as serious as any feminist writer who succeeds in convincing her female readers that the sun is porridge, a tree is a whale, and a locomotive is a piece of jewelry. Femininity is something one *knows* when one senses it—regardless of the gender of the one who notices it. Ms. Brownmiller sees it in paraphernalia—corsets, fluttering fans, and the accentuation of sexual differences on allegedly male terms, as those terms are perceived by pop and mass culture. She thus contributes to the modern and modish mystification, befuddlement, and debasement of woman's nature and destiny. She just does not understand that the core of both woman's nature and destiny is, in essence, a *different* type of power than that which is a man's power. Therefore, as a wise rabbi once said, disputing prattle is a waste of time. □

Movie Madness

A wrap-up of the actresses appearing in the 1983 Academy Award-nominated movies written by an operative for the Newsday News Service and appearing in the *Detroit News* includes the following:

Meryl Streep, in *Silkwood*, is a genuinely independent woman, a free spirit. She is not whitewashed as a martyr. She smokes pot, pops Quaaludes, drinks too much, is impulsively wanton, has lost custody of her three children to her husband.

She may not be whitewashed in the movie, but the following sentences in the quoted passage go beyond chlorine bleach:

She is nonetheless admirable because she is true to her own convictions. She is decent, self-reliant, with a passion for justice as well as for attractive men.

Impressive ratiocination. It leads us to the conclusion that Caligula was frustrated but really a lot of fun. □

Upwardly mobile young professionals became, suddenly, the intriguing and fashionable term of this political season. Senator Hart, the latest in the long history of electoral meteorites, a rather vapid man who talks a lot without saying much, popularized this designation and so made it a part of the daily news' vocabulary, for which he should be commended. The phrase is supposed to encompass a relatively new stratum of technological, bureaucratic, and corporate craftsmen, who are primarily involved with the so-called "knowledge" industries: they make a respectable income by knowing about the specialized skills, which, these days, move the economy, sell mass culture, and stimulate megaconsumption. For some never really explained reasons, it has become proper to assume that this large and proliferating group is a nonnegotiable fiefdom of the Democratic party, and that its collective mind is irrevocably suffused with the fumes of liberal faith and prejudice. But is it so?

The coming of age of this social subclass took place during the Vietnam era. A wise woman once told me that one wears throughout one's life at least one little token of the fashion that reigned at the time when he or she felt giddy and happy. It thus should be reasonably accepted that members of the generation in question will, till the end of their days, be sentimentally responsive to any antiwar and antinuclear slogans, all their attendant antiquated uselessness notwithstanding. Whether this instinctuality will turn into pathology, a stilted Pavlovian recoil syndrome, remains to be seen: after all, radical pacifists who had vowed, during the notorious Oxford Union debate in the 1930's, never to defend England and monarchy, turned into the most ferocious RAF fighter pilots just a few years later. Therefore, how many of the Democratic and liberal precepts from the Vietnam period have retained their sway over the composite ego of this group, and how this magic translates itself into body politics, are things which are more obscure than

ever. No enlightening—or merely probing—fiction has appeared over the last decade that provides arresting and profound insights into the group's psychology, ethos, or its comprehensive sense of life's meaning. Some feminist

A Prudent Progressive



Leopold Tyrmand

novels tried to accomplish it, yet all they contain is a kind of feminist socialist realism in which authenticity and truthfulness parallel that found in the Russian tales about Soviet workers and their love for communism. Movies, like the recent *Big Chill*, attempted to give some insight in the group's process of maturation and its incorporation into the classic American mechanism of dignified conformity that so smoothly had swallowed countless prior rebellions of souls and mores; however, both the *Big Chill's* introspection and conclusion are tepid, unmoored from any system of coherent thinking, from any systemic concept of existence and the world.

All of this indicates that the young,

upwardly mobile, urban professionals may be presently at the point of transition where, like many before them, they rediscover a need for precise notions that guide human endeavors, ambitions, hopes. Therefore, shouldn't we, as intellectual codifiers, talk to them, convincingly, about the order of existential pursuits, the normative system of social and personal ethics, and about a society that would produce its own binding moral code that is rooted in meaningful traditions of decency and rationality? Consequently, we could see a welcome translation of social ideology into political influence and electoral votes. The fashion ads in popular magazines clearly indicate a reborn yearning for a hierarchy of emotions, authority of feelings, sexual etiquette, for civility and comity instead of grooviness and funkiness, for a stylized and decorative behavioral norm. They are ready to respond to those who apply calm reason and seminal, low-key irony to the affairs of the contemporaneity, who seek the salvation of society, country, and individual life in the accumulated and updated riches of Western, Judeo-Christian civilization. From that perspective, Mr. Hart emerges as a bit of a primitive spokesman for their identity and their imagination. It soon will become quite clear that whether or not he has enough beef to offer them is immaterial. They need vision. Both personal and civic. □

MOVING?.

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